





The air was full of flying sparks and cinders.

—Page 58

HEAVE SHORT!

BY

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Author of "The Skipper of the Cynthia B"

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HAROLD BRETT

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To

MID AND BETTY

Who love Cape Cod,—its smiling skies, its sparkling waters,
this book is affectionately dedicated
by the author

FOREWORD

The title of this book is an order used by seafaring men in getting a ship under way. When hoisting the sail, the anchor chain is pulled up until the anchor is directly under the bow, but still on the bottom. With the anchor still holding, the filling sails will not cause the ship to yaw, and thus interfere with the work. After the sails are hoisted, then the anchor is raised quickly to the bows and the ship is off. So, I have chosen "Heave Short," signifying that we are ready to start: according to the mariner's lingo, "Heave Short, H'ist the jibs, and fill away."

To William Lewis Parsons, Esq., I am deeply grateful for certain legal information, which he has so kindly given me.

C. P. D.

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HEAVE SHORT

CHAPTER I

SAM HOTCHKISS ARRIVES AT SAQUOIT

“CAP’N SETH is expectin’ ye,” grinned Eben Bates, the driver of the depot stage, affably, as he handed Sam Hotchkiss and his bags into the carryall.

“Hey, Abner,” he yelled to a man standing on the depot platform, who, like Sam, had just alighted from the Boston train. “Goin’ over to Saquoit?”

“Cal’lated to,” drawled Abner, “if your rig’ll hold together.”

“If you’re goin’ with me you’ll have to heave short and git yer jib up in a hurry,” called Eben. “I’m late as it is.”

“It’s the fust time I ever knew you to be in a hurry,” grumbled Abner, as he climbed in to the back seat. “I allus like to stay and see

the train pull out. What's the matter, 'fraid you're old crow bait is going to die on ye, if you don't git thar quick?"

"This hoss ain't the dyin' kind," snapped the stage driver.

"Wal, I reckon you can git over to the village 'fore he does anyway, for if he was goin' to die he'd take his time about it, if he lived up to his reputation."

Eben Bates ignored this remark and turned to Sam. "You've come down purty early this season, ain't ye?" he asked.

"Yes, I didn't come till nearly July last year," answered the boy.

"What's the matter, don't ye go to school?" questioned Eben.

"Yes, I go to school, but I took my exams early and got off."

"Sho, that's funny. Warn't cuttin' up was ye, so they was anxious to git clear of ye?" he chuckled.

"No," laughed Sam. "Some of us got high enough grade in school so that the principal allowed us to leave as soon as we had all the work done."

"Wal, that's better than I ever done," said Eben reflectively. "Guess you must be purty smart in books."

"No, I don't think so," said Sam hastily, not wishing to give Eben the idea that he was bragging. "There were quite a number did the same thing. I just dug in, that's all. I had such a good time down here last summer that I wanted to get here as soon as I could."

"That beats all," remarked Eben. "When I was in school, I got as fur as the rule er three, and there I stuck. Couldn't seem to git no further, so I quit and went coastin'."

Sam had no idea what the rule of three was, but he did not wish to embarrass the driver of the stage by asking.

"Had a good time last summer, did ye?" Eben continued.

"You bet," said Sam.

"Got to be sunthin' of a sailor," he smiled. "I see ye win the boat race over to the Sianna Yacht Club in August. That was a good race: the *Cynthy B* is an able boat."

Without waiting for Sam to more than nod

assent he went on. "D'you ever know Cap'n Seth Nickerson and his wife 'fore you and your folks come down last summer? Didn't? Wal, you couldn't have found a better board-in' place. Awful nice folks, the Nickersons be. Yes suh, Cap'n Seth has helped more people out er trouble and eased 'em over shoals than any man in town. 'If you're in trouble, go to Seth Nickerson,' has been the motto in this town fer quite a spell.

"Le's see, yer pa warn't very well when you come last year, was he? How is he now?"

"Oh, he's all right," answered Sam. "The summer down here did him worlds of good. He and Mother have gone to North Carolina this week. He gave me my choice of going with them or coming down here and I chose Saquoit."

"You don't say!" ejaculated Eben. "Gi'n up a trip like that to cruise along with Cap'n Seth. You'd stopped at all the best hotels most likely. Don't that beat all! If any-buddy ever asked me to ship on a voyage like that they wouldn't have to urge me none," he

chuckled. "I ain't never been anywhere, hardly, except when I was coastin', and then I didn't have a chance to see nothin'. When I made New York I didn't dare go off the dock. No, I ain't been no where except from the house to the barn, and I can't find my way there in a fog," he laughed.

"Git ap, git ap, Jerry," chirped the driver. "I've got to git home and shift my clothes in time to git up to the Wescusset House for supper with a feller. I ain't passin' by no chance for free victuals."

Soon the stage stopped at the Craig's Mills post office, where Eben dragged the mail bags from under the back seat and carried them inside.

"Know how Eb happens to be goin' up to the hotel for supper?" asked Abner of Sam. Abner had kept silent during the ride.

"No," answered Sam, who had no particular interest in Eben's meals.

"I'll bet ye a silver dollar agin a cent he's goin' up to eat with that feller Hastings," he announced. "Yes suh, that's it, sure's you're a foot high."

"Hastings?" asked Sam. "I guess I don't know him."

"No, you wouldn't know him. You ain't been here sence last summer and Hastings jest hove in. Wal, I'll tell ye. He's what they call a promoter, from New York. Got lots er money: dresses right up to the nines. He's formed a stock company to run all the shellfish business in town. Been buyin' all the oyster grants he could and sellin' stock in the company besides. Purty good thing, too. He's bought nigh everybuddy's oyster grants here at Saquoit and over to Masonville, and they claim there's some big capitalists back of it. I hear that Cap'n Seth and two or three more is kinder holdin' off and won't sell out to the company, nor buy stock, nuther one. I reckon after a while they'll come to it. I'd go into it in a minute if I had any money."

The recital was cut short by the reappearance of the stage driver, who had waited for the mail to be sorted and Saquoit's portion placed in a separate bag.

"All aboard," he shouted. "Git ap."

As they rode along the plains and marshes, Sam was lost in the May time beauties of Cape Cod. He could hear the clear peep of the frogs and the hopeful whistle of the whip-poor-will. To the boy of fifteen, who had been housed in a school room all winter, the spring twilight sounds of the beloved Cape Cod came as the sweetest music, particularly as he thought of the joyous four months ahead: four months of outdoors, four months of fishing and sailing, four months at Uncle Seth's.

In May on Cape Cod the air is soft and filled with the earthy smells and the scent of swelling buds. Hope and promise come to age and youth alike and fill the heart with the joy of living. When the day wanes on the harbors, marshes, lakes and meadows, all the singing and chirping things of the twilight hours furnish vespers of cheer.

"I wish *I'd* jest sold a parstur lot," came from Abner in the back seat.

"Eh?" said Eben. "Wha' for?"

"Mebbe then I'd git an invite up to the

Wescusset for supper," said he mournfully.

"What are ye talking about, Abner Benson?" demanded the driver.

"Oh, nothin'," he said, "only I cal'lated Hastings was givin' ye a supper."

"Wal, s'posin' he is," snorted Eb. "Gut a right to, ain't he, as long as he can pay for it?"

"Sartin, sartin," Abner hastened to say. "I was only sayin' that if I'd sold a parstur, same as you have, mebbe I could git in on this thing."

Silence followed as the old white horse plodded down the tree-bordered village street with its snug white cottages.

Suddenly Sam spied Captain Seth Nickerson and his wife, Aunt Cynthia, at their gate waiting for the stage. They hadn't changed a bit, thought Sam. Aunt Cynthia in her neat gingham gown, and snow white neckerchief with the same cameo pin, looked not a day older. Uncle Seth, "broad of beam," as he himself said, with white hair and beard and the glow of health upon his cheeks, stood as erect as he did in the days when he paced

a vessel's deck, thirty years before. Just the kind of man that boys, real boys, gravitate towards. Just the kind of man who would say, "Wal, son, how about gittin' a mess of clams?" or sitting upon the bench on the sunny side of the woodshed would begin, "Makes me think of the time—" and so on. Like Sam, nearly every one called Captain Nickerson, Uncle Seth.

Sam leaped from the wagon before it stopped and rushed toward the old couple at the gate. He planted a smack upon the soft cheek of Aunt Cynthia and shook hands with Captain Nickerson.

"Wal, Sam, I believe you've grown a head and you're ten pounds heavier. Ain't he shot up though, Cynthia?" said Uncle Seth.

"I guess likely he has," admitted his wife. "That seems to be a habit with boys and I often think they must be kinder sick of hearin' older folks marvel at it so much. I know when our Robert was growin' up he used to say, 'Mother, it seems as though all folks talk about to me is how I'm growin'.' "

"Don't you worry, Cynthia," smiled her

husband. "Sam and I will have plenty to talk about after we git squared away. Jest now Sam would ruther hear you say supper was ready than anything else."

"Goodness me, I was goin' to make corn muffins!" she exclaimed as she hurried for the kitchen.

Aunt Cynthia was never as happy as when preparing "good victuals" for her "men folks." Sam remembered the wonderful dishes that Aunt Cynthia concocted last summer. It didn't seem as though he ever ate anything that tasted so good as the food at Uncle Seth's.

"Wal, Sam, I'm glad to see ye and no mistake," said Uncle Seth heartily. "You must feel considerbul set up that you come out so well in your studies."

"I'm glad I did," said Sam, "but you know there were others who did the same thing."

"That's all right, Sam, s'posin' there was. You gut what you went after by workin' hard. The habit of workin' hard is the main thing anyway, whether you win or not," said the old man earnestly.

Just at that moment there came to Sam a feeling that Uncle Seth was not quite himself: that he seemed to have something on his mind. True it was that he laughed and joked but at the same time Sam had a "hunch" that the old man had something that he was "figgerin' on," as he himself would have said.

"How have you been this winter since we saw you, Uncle Seth?" asked Sam.

"Fust class, Sam," responded Captain Nickerson. "Don't seem to be driftin' astern a mite, so fur as I can see."

"I'll bet it's that stock company that's got him worried," thought Sam, and resolved to ask him point blank about it at the first opportunity.

"How's the fishing?" he asked.

"To tell ye the truth, I ain't had time to wet a line yit," said Uncle Seth. "I've been gardening and paintin' and general chorin' 'round so I've been purty well driv up."

"I think I could paint," asserted Sam, "and I could do something in the garden too, I'm sure."

"Wal, I'm allus willin' to take on an extry hand, especially if he's willin'. There'll be plenty to do around here for a spell and we can enjoy playin' better, I cal'late, when we've got our work all done up."

"Got the *Cynthia B.* in the water yet?" asked Sam.

"I have jest, and that's about all. I ain't hardly sailed her yit," said the old skipper. "I scraped her and give her a coat of paint and shoved her in. She's down there swellin' up. She needs a new main sheet and her upper works ought to be gone over. There's sure plenty for us to do."

"And it will all be fun," declared the boy. "You can set me to work bright and early in the morning."

Never once did Uncle Seth remind Sam of how the summer before, as a fourteen-year-old, he had come to Saquoit under protest with his mouth all puckered to have a miserable time. That was like Uncle Seth not to bring up unpleasant topics. But things hadn't been dull. The pleasures of the shore had been unfolded to the boy, under the old

sea captain's guidance, and he was soon having the time of his life. He had learned to do things: sail a boat, fish, catch blue claws and besides that, the adventure and fascination of the old seafaring days had been recited to him by the old skipper, until Sam, too, in fancy fought the northern gales and trod the heaving deck.

"Where do you want Zeb Makepeace to put them spars, Seth?" called his wife from the kitchen. "He's jest driv up and he's in a hurry."

"Tell him to dump 'em down anywhere except on top of my cold frame," called the captain.

"Did you have to get new spars for the *Cynthia B.*?" asked Sam solicitously.

"No, them's for another boat I'm buildin'," answered Uncle Seth.

"Is there anything the matter with the *Cynthia*? You aren't going to discard her, are you?" inquired Sam, his eyes wide open.

"Bless ye, no, she's all right. Never better," the old sailor hastened to assure the boy.

Sam had had a moment of uneasiness. He loved the little catboat in which he had explored every crook and corner of Saquoit Bay and he would have sorrowed deeply if any disaster had befallen the craft he had learned to sail and in which he had won a race the summer before.

"I'm buildin' this craft for a feller up Boston way," explained Captain Nickerson. "He see the *Cynthia B.* and liked her fust rate, so I'm buildin' this one for him. I was some time makin' up my mind to undertake the job but its comin' on purty well; all planked and decked over. Some finishin' off to do and then her paintin' and riggin' will take some time. Guess a month or six weeks ought to fetch it."

"Supper," called Aunt Cynthia, and Sam needed no second invitation, for he had had an early lunch.

While he ate the crisp corn muffins, broiled flounders, beach plum jelly, topped off with fluffy whipped cream pie, Sam talked of his winter at home in Boston.

"This filet of sole is great, Aunt Cynthia," he said, as he passed his plate for the third helping.

"Filly what?" asked Uncle Seth, in astonishment.

"Why, filet of sole," said Sam. "I've eaten it when I've lunched with Father at the club, but it didn't come up to this."

"Bless your heart these ain't nothin' but flounders," said Mrs. Nickerson. "Lucy Emma's husband caught a mess and they had more'n they wanted, so she brought us some."

"They are what we call English sole in Boston," declared Sam.

"Seems to me I've heard they call 'em sunthin' different after their train ride to Boston," said Captain Nickerson. "They take the bone out of 'em, the same as we do here, but when they git up town them flounders begin to git puffed up and put on airs and take on a fancy name."

"They are good, whatever the name is," said Sam.

"Don't seem as though you'd et a thing,"

complained Mrs. Nickerson. "Have some more of this cream pie, do."

Sam declared that he was full to the eyes and hadn't eaten a meal that tasted as good since he was at Saquoit before.

CHAPTER II

THE EASTERN SHELLFISH COMPANY

IT was six o'clock the next morning when Sam was awakened by a call from Uncle Seth at the foot of the stairs.

"Turn out, aloft there."

"Aye, aye, sir," cried Sam, his feet striking the floor. He hustled into his clothes, and was down in the kitchen in short order, where the old Captain was building the fire.

"You must have slept in your clothes," said the old man.

"No," laughed Sam, "but I didn't waste any time in getting them on."

"Aunt Cynthia ain't showed up yit," Uncle Seth remarked, as he touched a match to the pile of kindlings. "Now that's started I'll go out and do the chores."

Sam followed him to the barn and helped in the "before breakfast chores." He gave

Bess, the cow, a measure of grain and forked sweet smelling hay from the loft. While Uncle Seth got out the milking stool and sat down beside the sleek Holstein, Sam opened the tie-up door and looking down the pasture lane he breathed deeply of the fresh early morning air.

"You'd have more light if you sat on the other side of the cow," he commented.

"Yes, yes, but I don't hanker to try it," chuckled the old man. "Cows are funny about that. You allus want to milk a cow from the starb'ud side. If you ever tried it on the port side she'd most likely kick you and the pail all over the deck."

"Are you in earnest?" asked Sam, thinking it might be one of the old sailor's jokes.

"Sartin, I'm in earnest," said Uncle Seth. "I ain't goin' to demonstrate what she'd do if I went up alongside of her to port. I done that once when I fust come home from sea. You'll have to take my word for it. I don't know why it is cows are so finnickky about that: mebbe its the female of the critter."

Sam sat down on a stool where he could

watch the old man and hear the musical sound of the streams of milk as each one stirred the milk already in the pail to a froth.

"There was a chap on the stage yesterday who was telling me about an oyster company that somebody was forming—"

"Yes, yes, they've formed one," muttered Uncle Seth, "and it bothers me like time. I don't say much about it to Cynthia, but I'm considerbul worried about it."

"Why do you worry about it?" asked the boy. "You don't have to buy any of the stock nor sell out your oyster grant to them."

"No, I don't, that's a fact," Captain Nickerson agreed, "but my neighbors and friends in town think *they* do, and I think they're makin' a big mistake. That feller Hastings has gut 'em hog tied. He's suppered 'em at the hotel and he's cigarred 'em, till they believe every word he tells 'em.

"I'll tell ye. Hastings blew in here about a week ago; started right in talkin' about combinin' all the oyster grants in town and over to Masonville and makin' one big company out of 'em. He's bought grants, right and left,

payin' for 'em mostly in stock, I hear. Made out that there'd be more money in it for everybuddy if it was all under one management: improved methods, better prices for shellfish and so on. He's a slick appearin' feller, 'course, that is the kind that would allus do that sort of business, but I figger he's a good deal like a Ben Davis apple, not nigh so good as he looks. He's sold stock, too, and a lot of it."

"What makes you think that it isn't a good thing, Uncle Seth?" asked Sam, who had always heard more or less of combines and stock companies from his father and his associates in the lumber trade.

"I don't know, Sam," replied the old man thoughtfully. "I jest have the feelin' that our folks here are goin' to lose. Yer see, I don't know anything about sech things and mebbe that's why I'm sorter prejudiced against 'em.

"I've figgered it out this way. These promoters'll git all the grants under their control and keepin' controllin' interest in the concern, mebbe make some money the fust year. The

folks that hold stock will think they're git-
tin' a purty soft thing and the promoters
can begin to unload on 'em slow and careful
like. The fust thing anybuddy'll know the
New York fellers will git rid of all their
stock and the local stock holders will be left
holdin' the bag.

"Yes suh, its gut me worried. It ain't very
often that I let anything trouble me much,
but this 'ere is so much out of my general
course, that I feel sort of helpless."

"These promoters may be honest," said Sam.
"Perhaps it will be a good thing."

"Don't believe it," said the old man.
"There ain't no folks with money that these
fellers claim is back of the thing goin' to come
down here and mix up in a little shellfish busi-
ness. No suh, Sam, there's a hole in the
skimmer somewheres but I can't find it."

"It's a darn shame," said Sam indignantly.

"It is, and no mistake," said Captain Seth.
"There's folks buyin' this stock that's puttin'
all they've got into it. Folks that ain't gut
but five hundred dollars to their names handin'
it over to this man Hastings."

"I could write to Father and see if he could suggest anything," said Sam, hopefully, who thought that his father could handle almost any situation.

"I reckon he's too busy to fool 'round with our little two-penny squabbles down here," said the old man, shaking his head sadly. "I wouldn't bother him, if I was you. But I'm sorry for our folks, if it all turns out the way, I'm 'fraid its goin' to, and I'm sorry for our little shellfish industry."

"I am going to write Father tonight," declared Sam. "I'm not afraid of bothering him."

"Wal, wal, do jest as you are a mind to, Sam, I'm stumped, and no mistake."

CHAPTER III

THE NEW SAIL BOAT

UNCLE Seth had apparently put all disquieting thoughts of his dilemma out of his mind, for at breakfast he joked and laughed as though he hadn't a care in the world.

Perhaps the old sailor was feeling easier now that Sam's father was to be consulted. Not so with Sam,—he felt that he would like to do something desperate to rid the town of these stock promoters.

"Wal, Sam, let's have a look at the new boat," suggested Uncle Seth. "We'll work on her a spell this mornin'."

"Oh, yes, Uncle Seth," said Sam, "I had almost forgotten you were building a craft."

"There she is," announced the old skipper, throwing open the door to the shop. "What do you think of her?"

"Isn't she a dandy!" exclaimed the boy. "But she isn't any better than the *Cynthia B.*, even if she is bigger," he added loyally.

"No, I guess she ain't no better than the *Cynthy*," said the old man, "nor much bigger either. You see her bow's a leetle more slopin' and her stern more shaller and not so square. That makes her look longer than she reely is. You notice her stern is narrowed up so she'll steer well, if she's runnin' 'fore heavy seas. They'll ride by her and she'll rise to each sea like a duck. She's a good weather boat or I miss my guess."

The Captain rubbed his hand over the smooth surface of the hull. "Plenty of curve to her bulwarks from stem to stern: she'll ride the rollers like a frigate bird, that craft will."

"She's a stout looking boat, all right," remarked Sam.

"Stout, I guess she is stout," asserted the builder. "I've put her together for keeps,—oak keel and timbers and every piece of her as clear as a nut. That boat is built right, if I do say it."

"I'm anxious to see her slide into the water," said Sam.

"I'll be kinder interested to see how she rides, myself," admitted the Captain. "She'll be a purty boat, I think. I'll paint her hull white with a green water line. Then, with the coamin' and ribbon varnished, she'll be a sight for sore eyes, I tell ye."

"She surely will," agreed Sam, as he looked at the graceful lines of the curving hull.

"It's been some time sence I built a boat," said Uncle Seth, "and if this one turns out as well as I expect, it's goin' to be considerbul satisfaction, for when I started the job I wondered whether I'd kept my hand in and whether I could do it or not."

"I guess there's no doubt about that," said Sam heartily.

"I guess the old man's come back after all," he chuckled. "Sunthin' like an old whale I knew once—"

"A whale you knew?" laughed Sam.

"Sure," said the old salt. "You see there's whales that you remember and there's those you don't. Some you feel acquainted with

and some that you jest haul in. I reckon there's personalities among whales jest as there is among folks."

"What about this particular whale, Uncle Seth?" asked Sam.

"Wal, I'll tell ye," began Uncle Seth. "Yer see, I allus have to start at the beginnin' and things come along natural like. It was when I was boat steerer on the *Luella Bently*. We got under way from New Bedford in October. Had good weather all the way to Cape Verde and purty nigh all the way south to the Cape of Good Hope: that is, no bad gales nor nothin'. Wal, we rounded the Cape and then on up to Madagascar, takin' whales occasionally along. We gut into the Indian Ocean and there it was that I run afoul of this whale I speak of.

"One mornin', jest at the crack of day, the lookout at the masthead sings out, 'Thar she blows, b-l-o-w-s, b-l-o-w-s.' Everybuddy tumbled on deck in a hurry.

" 'Where away?' yelled the old man.

" 'Three p'int's off the lee bow, sir.'

" 'Thar she breaches.'

“ ‘Lower away the boats,’ called the Cap’n. Everything was hustle and bustle. I can see that ship’s deck now,” said Uncle Seth, reminiscently squinting his eyes. “I can hear the rattle of the falls as them four boats took the water with hardly a jolt.

“The ship keeper had trimmed the yards to the wind and hauled up courses, so when her helm was put down it deadened her way, and the boats could put off without foulin’ one another.

“I was in the Cap’n’s boat. We put for that whale, everybuddy bendin’ to it. A whale boat goes through the water purty, I tell ye. About twenty-eight foot long, she is; as clean as a dolphin and rides the seas like a Mother Carey’s chicken.

“We come up to that whale gentle like, purty nigh wood to black skin. He was a lone bull. He didn’t notice us, for he was feedin’. But then, a whale can’t see very well anyway, for his eyes are purty well aft down nigh to the angle of his jaw and he has to turn his head from side to side in order to look with both eyes. They claim he’s gut two

fields of vision, if you know what I mean.

"I was forrud, you remember that's where the boatsteerer is till after he strikes a whale, then he runs aft and takes the steerin' oar. I gut my thigh in the clumsy cleat, that's the crotch you know, with paddin' on it for a man to brace his leg against so he can keep his balance when he strikes, and the old man whispered, 'Give it to him.'

"I gut both irons into the whale and then we backed off and waited to see what he'd do. We knew he'd do one of several things. He might swim around in a circle, millin' we call it, or he might git his eye on the boat and charge it, or he might sink or he might start and run. Wal, he started goin' in a circle. He was a big feller and I judged would go better than eighty bar'l. After he'd milled for a spell he sounded, that is, went down. Never in my life see a whale run out so much line, nor one that stayed down so long, never. We bent on one tub of line and then another, hitchin' drogues on each of 'em to slow him up all we could. Still he kept goin'. After awhile he come up to the wind'ard and we

begun to haul in as fast as we could. Then he begun to run. Jimmynetty, how he did run! Took us on one of the doggondest Nantucket sleigh rides you ever see.

"All of a sudden the line come slack and we took in fast.

"Now we can git alongside of him, I thought to myself and we did, only it was t'other way 'round. He gut alongside of us. We was within fifty foot of him when he ketched sight of our boat and down he come, straight for us, with that old under jaw of his hangin' open.

"I give the steerin' oar a quick turn and gut out of his way. The whale boat bounced around in his wash like a dipper duck. When the critter went by us the old man driv the lance into him. I expected to see him spout thick blood, but, no suh! he done nothin' of the kind. He come for us again.

"Again we dodged him but the Cap'n couldn't jab him with the lance. We dodged that whale three times, and each time I thought sure we was goin' to be stove.

"He stopped a hundred foot off or so, and

at that minute our boat shot up in the air, and us with it, of course, like it had been shot from a bow gun. Whale line and oars and tubs was throwed every which way. It was the most mixed-up mess you ever see.

“When I gut my senses and grabbed a floating oar, I see what had happened. Another bull had come up under us and had stove our whale boat into a million pieces.

“The larb’ud boat was nearby and picked us up and we made off toward the ship and watched them two bulls. Off in the distance I see a school of cows, and I knew right off, that this second feller was a young bull from that herd, for they’ll go out of their way to fight a lone bull. The one we struck was an old feller and had been driv out of some herd probably.

“Wal, suh, them two whales backed off from each other a piece and then, with their great under jaws hangin’ down showin’ their great wicked lookin’ teeth they come for one another.

“Smack! they come together head on, eighty

tons of bone and flesh, as though propelled by powerful engines. Their jaws interlocked and sech twistin' and heavin' you never see. Great strips of flesh was tore from their heads and the water all around 'em was a mass of red foam.

"Our whale was handicapped, no doubt, by havin' two irons and a lance wound in him, but you wouldn't notice it, for he fought savage. He gut loose from the younger one and backin' off come at him again. We could hear the thud! thud! when their bodies struck each other with tremendous force. Sometimes their flukes was out of water, and sometimes their heads, but, whichever way it was, they hung to one another and wrenched and tore like sixty.

"For more'n a hour they kept at it: poundin' and thrashin' this way and that. Our 'drogues was a mass of splinters throwed out over the surface of the reddened crests.

"Sudden like, the young whale sunk like a stone. Then as sudden, up he come and gut an under holt on the old feller. Both of 'em

was blowin' in roarin' gasps. Crack! went their jaws as their teeth snapped on t'other's head.

"'Go it, old feller,' hollered the men. Sympathy seemed to be with him, for we felt acquainted with him, somehow, and then I reckon the men sorter pitied the old cuss who had been driv out of his herd by some of the younger bulls.

"'Hang to him,' came from the bow boat that had pulled up to watch the fight.

"At that minute the old gray-backed one got a tremendous holt. Jimmynetty, how he lifted! He fetched a mighty heave that seemed to fairly lift the young one clean out of water.

"Crack! came a report like the breakin' of a big tree at the butt and the young whale flopped a bit, and lay fin out.

"'Pull for 'em,' yelled the old man. The mate's boat made for the young dead whale and the starb'ud boat for the old one. The boat we was in, havin' a double crew, couldn't do nothin', so we jest watched. I warn't interested in the dead whale, for all they'd got

to do was to git the fluke chains on him and tow him to the ship, but the old bull layin' there blowin', interested me considerbul. The starb'ud boat was within five boat lengths of him and somehow I was turrible glad it hadn't fell to my lot to kill that old whale. I'd ben whalin' for some time. That was how I earned my livin', killin' whales, but with this whale it was different. Here he was, a lone old bull who had been driv out of his herd, but had earned his place again by killing the younger one. It did seem a pity to make way with him after he'd put up sech a fight with two irons in him.

"I wondered if the second mate, who was standin' in the bow, waitin' with his lance ready, felt the same way I did. Now they was two boat lengths from the old feller who was puffin' away from the effects of his battle. Now one boat length, when, if you'll believe me, that old bull settled, sunk horizontally, as they do sometimes, with hardly a splash. Jest went down, quiet like, and he warn't there no more.

"The men rested on their oars and looked

at each other. I reckon they was all sorter glad the old critter'd gone down. He'd come up miles away most likely. There wouldn't be any use in chasin' him, for he'd go like the wind.

" 'Wal, boys,' says the old man, 'there goes ninety bar'ls of oil. Pull for the ship.'

"Everybuddy jest set back and cheered,—cheered for that eighty barrel whale, even though the money warn't to be sneezed at.

"As we pulled over to the ship, I could still see the herd of cows, and, directly, I see our old whale breach two mile away and then he started racin' to join 'em. 'He'd come back, Sam, and I tell ye I felt he'd earned his place.

"I can sympathize with him, for I'm grow-ing old myself. When I git a boat ready now, and she takes the water purty and turns out well, I sorter feel like I'd earned my place in the herd once more. Yes, suh, I allus feel considerbul fellership for that old gray-backed critter."

CHAPTER FOUR

SUPPER IN THE VESTRY.

“**S**ETH, you and Sam will need to slick up a mite,” said Aunt Cynthia, “for we are goin’ up to the vestry for supper. You know, they are tryin’ to raise money enough for a new carpet for the church.”

Mrs. Nickerson flew about the kitchen, hauling pans of savory food from the oven or stopping a few moments to beat some mixture at the table.

“Cal’late you’re doin’ you share, ain’t ye, Cynthy?” asked Uncle Seth, half grumbling.

“Of course I be,” affirmed his wife. “I aim to do more’n my share, for there’s plenty that won’t, and the rest of us have got to make up for ’em.”

Uncle Seth chuckled. “I guess you’re right. There’s a heap of folks that are willin’

to eat a church supper, especially for a small price. They have their hardest attack of religion jest when the tickets are sellin' for not over thirty-five cents. They eat about two dollars wuth for the thirty-five cents and then they settle back and feel satisfied that they've done purty well by the Lord."

"Anybuddy that didn't know ye would think you was disrespectful of sacred things," said his wife reproachfully.

Uncle Seth went out to the shed and Aunt Cynthia confided to Sam, "Uncle Seth is so bitter against some of the folks in this town and the way they do things, it's a wonder that some of 'em don't git put out about it, but they don't seem to. He pretends that he ain't much of a church man, and says some purty sharp things about them that is, but, bless you, Seth Nickerson is one of the most religious men in the world, only he ain't very much on hollerin' around about it: if ever there was a man that hid his light under a bushel that man's my husband. He never done a wrong thing in his life, knowingly, and he's done a heap of good. His faith is as deep rooted

as can be. But there, you know Uncle Seth and I don't need to tell you what he is."

Sam went out to find the old Captain and the low rumblings of a sea chantey led him to the shop, where the old sailor was seated in front of a small mirror trimming his white beard with a pair of shears.

"Doin' a leetle barberin'," he explained. "Thought I'd have to dude up a mite to please Cynthia."

"I never went to a church supper," said the boy.

"Sho, you never did," he said, stopping his clipping to turn about on the stool. "Wal, wal, you'll like it, I guess. It's purty good fun to git together with the neighbors and talk and eat. You see, we have to make most of our good times down here, and them's generally the best kind. Of course, they want the money for the new carpet but they've gut to have some excuse for gittin' together."

"Where does the food come from?" asked Sam. "Do they buy it?"

"Buy it, no," chuckled the old man. "Everybuddy chips in and gives some, sun-

thin' like what the sailors call a tarpaulin muster. Aunt Cynthia'll take a cake or two, or a pie or two, somebuddy else will take a pot er beans, or a biled ham, and so on. They allus have more food than they can eat and what's left they generally auction off, or give to some poor family."

"That's funny," mused Sam. "Folks give the food, and then go and pay for their supper that's made up of the food they have already given."

"That's right, it is funny," grinned Uncle Seth, combing the short hairs from his whiskers, "but that's the way it works out. Why, I've known Cynthy to bake a pie and take it up there, we'd pay for our tickets, and then after supper, if the pie warn't et, I'd bid it in at auction, so we'd really pay fer that pie three times. I cal'late Cynthy's pies have cost me as high as two dollars a pie. They was wuth it, though, for Cynthy does make marster pie."

The church vestry was like a humming beehive, when they entered the door that evening.

Women with white aprons were bustling about, moving a dish here, and rearranging plates there, upon the long white paper-covered tables. Paper napkins protruded from the heavy mugs at each place. The odor of steaming coffee and eatables came from the kitchen.

Sam looked over the tables and the amount of good things that he saw amazed him. Plate after plate of brown rolls, platters of cold meat, castles and forts of frosted cake, and pies,—pies were everywhere. Yellow custard, with now and then a pie of the deeper shade of pumpkin, flanked by a stately cream pie with its white fluffy covering, made Sam's mouth water.

Deacon Ambrose arose and with a loud clearing of his throat for attention announced: "Ladies and Gentlemen: As Seth Nickerson has come we will now take our seats and proceed to make havoc of these victuals."

Everybody roared at this sally and Uncle Seth grinned good-naturedly, remarking that he hoped "somebuddy'd brought along an

extry pot er beans for Deacon Ambrose." Then with scraping of chairs and much laughter they rushed to their places.

"What you in sech a hurry for, Eph," said Uncle Seth, to a short thickset man, who was scrambling his way toward the head table.

"I've gut my eye on that chocolate layer cake," grinned Eph, as he finally succeeded in gaining the coveted position in proximity to the rich looking dainty he had indicated.

"Trust Eph to git what he wants at a church supper," laughed Uncle Seth.

After Mr. Simmonds, the minister, had offered prayer, the company was seated and the platters and nappies and plates of good things were passed up and down the long tables. The waitresses began filling the mugs with coffee. There was an occasional mishap, as when Deacon Ambrose dragged his coat sleeve over the top of a particularly soft cream pie. His wife, with many imprecations, rushed him grumbling to the kitchen to wash it off before it "struck in."

"Now, Sam," urged Uncle Seth, "if there's anything you want, jest sing out."

From the looks of his heaped-up plate the boy thought there could not possibly be anything he'd wish. "Gee, this is great," he whispered to Uncle Seth.

"Like it, do ye?" the old man smiled.

"Yes," agreed the boy, who was trying to eat, look about and listen to the conversation at the same time.

"I see you're able to take nourishment," said a tall, spare man, who sat on the other side of Uncle Seth.

"I take all I can git," responded Uncle Seth. "Sam, let me interduce Mr. Peters. This is my young friend, Sam Hotchkiss. Sam, this is Uncle Ben Peters, one of the wust liars in the whole church," he added with a chuckle.

"I'm pleased to meet ye, young man, but I'm allfired sorry to see ye in sech company," he cackled, in a high voice. "You probably don't know Cap'n Seth as well as I do, but I could tell ye enough about him, if I had a mind to. I won't though, for you're young and ought not to hear sech things," he cackled again and nudged Uncle Seth in the ribs.

"Uncle Ben is all right," laughed the Cap-

tain, "and for a man of fifty he's purty spry."

"Now don't you let this old shellback fool you into thinkin' I'm that young. I'll tell ye the truth, I'm eighty-four. That's allus one of Seth's jokes, to try to make folks think I'm a young helter skelter of fifty."

Uncle Ben Peter's statement was astounding to Sam, for the man was as straight as a ram-rod and carried himself in such a way that he could easily have passed for twenty years younger. Sam noticed that he ate the cold boiled ham and baked beans with relish, denying himself nothing.

"Miss Handy," he squeaked, to a waitress hurrying by, "how's the coffee holdin' out? I seem to be dryer 'n a fish."

"That makes your third cup, Uncle Ben," she replied disapprovingly. "There's plenty more, if you want to resk it."

"I'll resk it," declared Uncle Ben, "and a few more hot rolls and ham too, while you're about it."

"Won't eatin' so allfired much hurt ye?" asked Uncle Seth.

"I don't know, Sethie," chuckled the old

fellow, "that's what I'm goin' to find out. Pass the mustard pickles, will ye?"

Sam thought this was quite the most unique party he had ever attended. He was having a good time listening to the good-natured banter flung about, and incidentally, he was eating all the good things that were pressed upon him.

The ladies of the parish, who were attending to the wants of those seated at the tables, seemed to feel it their duty to see that he was amply provided for. They called him Sam, just as Aunt Cynthia and Uncle Seth did, and thus taking him into the community family made the lad feel quite at home.

"Why, Sam, you poor boy, you ain't gettin' half enough to eat," said Mrs. Jewett, hovering over him.

"I'm making it very well, thank you, Mrs. Jewett," protested Sam, who had already eaten more than what he considered three men needed to satisfy their hunger.

"Do have a piece of this custard pie," she insisted, sliding a large slab of the jiggly dessert upon his plate.

"This is great pie," declared Sam enthusiastically, "I never tasted better, I'll bet you made it yourself."

"Tell ye the truth, I did," she confessed. "I had purty poor luck with it, though. It's fair, but, if you'll come up sometime, I'll give you some pie that's pie. . . ."

Sam thought this specimen left nothing to be desired and told Mrs. Jewett so, at which the little lady patted him on the shoulder and laughed delightedly.

"You've made a friend of Melissey for life, Sam," said Uncle Seth. "She's a marster cook, but I guess the only time anybuddy ever praises her cookin' is at times like this. Old Jerry, her husband, does nuthin' but find fault all the time. You see Jerry ain't over'n above fond of work and she practically supports the family with sewin' and sech. Jerry is purty busy talkin' at the store and waitin' for the mail, so he leaves most of the work around their place to Melissey. He's one of those fellers that's never dry when the water pail's empty."

Sam felt sorry for the bright-faced little

woman and he determined to praise her pie again at the first opportunity if it would give her any pleasure.

"I've thought I'd like to teach Jerry a lesson some time," remarked Uncle Seth, "and show him what a blessin' he's got in his wife but, —there I am talkin' about the neighbors. If I could change some of 'em over, I s'pose I should do it, but I reckon the Almighty made 'em as he wants 'em and it don't behoove me to mess up the job none."

After the supper had been cleared away, the young folks gathered in one end of the big room and chattered away with such evident enjoyment that Uncle Seth called one of the boys to where he and Sam were sitting.

"Tom, this is my friend, Sam Hotchkiss. This is Tom Stearns, Sam. Tom, take Sam over and interduce him to the young folks. He don't want to stay here with us old shell-backs all the time."

Tom Stearns, a tall, manly-looking young chap, a bit older than Sam, shook hands with him cordially.

"Sure, Uncle Seth," he said, "I'll take him around. Come on, Sam."

Tom's conversation, which showed not quite the same accent as that of most of the young people of the village, who were prone to talk much as their elders did, prompted Sam to ask, "Do you live here all the year?"

"Pretty nearly all the time. I am back from school for some of the week ends and vacations."

"Oh, are you in school out of town?" Sam inquired.

"Yes, I go to the State Agricultural College," said Tom.

"How does it happen that a boy from Cape Cod should attend an agricultural college? I didn't know the Cape raised anything but cranberries and oysters."

"Guess you haven't been around the Cape much," Tom laughed. "Cape Cod is getting to be one of the best small-fruit areas in the country. We can raise anything here. I can show you a farm or ranch of thousands of acres."

Sam was surprised and showed it. "How long have they been farming down here?" he asked.

"Ever since the Portuguese convinced us it could be done," answered Tom. "Yes, sir, they are the people who first began to set out large orchards and raise peaches: they are also the first who began raising small fruits. They are great gardeners, those fellows."

Sam met all the girls and boys and soon found himself talking and laughing with them as old acquaintances. He declared to himself, with surprise, that they were as jolly and companionable as any of his crowd back home in Boston. Soon they were playing games and Sam was having a great time. Some of the older people joined and when Uncle Seth and Uncle Ben Peters swung about in a Virginia reel the fun became all the merrier.

"Time all honest folks was abed," announced Uncle Seth, mopping his face, and the party broke up.

"Did you have a good time?" asked Aunt Cynthia on the way home.

"Bully," said Sam. "That Tom Stearns is a fine chap. He is coming over and take me out in his flivver in a few days."

"You won't find a better boy to chum 'round with," said Uncle Seth. "He's had to earn nigh all of his money to go to college with. He used to go quahoggin' and clammin', but lately he's took to raisin' garden truck and strawberries for the summer trade and they say he's done real well at it. He declares that anybuddy can make a good livin' off Cape Cod soil. His mother's right proud of him. He's gut a sister goin' to the Normal school and studyin' to be a teacher. Mis' Stearns has gut a right to be proud of her two children."

CHAPTER V

THE WOODS FIRE

TOM Stearns was even better than his promise for the very next morning his battered old flivver rattled up to Uncle Seth's gate.

"I'll holler to Sam," said Aunt Cynthia from the doorway. "Won't you come in, Tom?"

"No thank you, Aunt Cynthia, I'll wait out here."

"Pretty good sounding motor," commented Sam, as he climbed in.

"That's about the only thing about the old boat that wasn't cracked or something when I got it," laughed Tom. "I bought it last fall for fifty dollars and spent my spare time in fixing it up. It's handy for me to run around in and deliver vegetables. It was a mess, though, when I first got it."

They sped along the smooth Cape roads and Tom pointed out spots of interest. Sam had never ridden about very much on Cape Cod but had confined his pleasures to Saquoit, so it was all new to him.

"See that farm," said Tom, as a broad field came into view. "That's one of our good ones. They go in for stock mostly. Perhaps all this farm business will bore you, but I'm so doggoned interested in it that I think every one else must be."

"Oh, no, I won't be bored," asserted Sam. "I find I'm interested in a whole lot of things since I first came to the Cape. Do you know, when I first found out that we were coming to Saquoit last summer, I had an awful grouch, but it didn't take Uncle Seth two days to make me forget it. I had such a good time that I would hate to think of going anywhere else for the summer."

"No, it wouldn't take Uncle Seth long to cure a grouch," laughed Tom. "You couldn't be in the dumps where he is. I'm very fond of him and Aunt Cynthia. They are mighty good to Mother while I'm away during the

winter. There's nothing I wouldn't do for those two.

"There's a Portuguese farm," he continued. "See those peach trees. They'll be loaded in a couple of months."

Sam knew nothing about peaches, except that they came in baskets, but the trees were pretty, and, even to his unpractised eye looked thrifty. Rows and rows of them with their tender green leaves, small at this time of the year, stretched away along the hill side.

"That looks like a fire," he said, pointing to a cloud of smoke which hung over the crest of the low hill.

"By George, it does," said Tom, slowing down. "That looks as though it was over Masonville way. Guess we'd better find out about it."

Tom turned the auto into a side road and soon they came upon a small house where Tom telephoned the fire warden of the town.

"It is in Masonville, just as I thought," he said, as he backed around.

"Are you going?" asked Sam.

"Sure, I'm going."

"Why are you going back this way?" asked Sam, for the fire was in the opposite direction.

"I'm going back to Saquoit and get some different clothes and one thing and another," he answered.

Tom was giving his whole attention to the road, for, in making time, the little car cavorted madly about until they got upon the main road again. "There," he said, "this is better going. Say, Sam, has Uncle Seth told you anything about the new shellfish company they've started?"

"Yes, he has," answered Sam, "and it has him bothered. He is such a generous old chap he doesn't want his friends to lose any money. He doesn't know for sure that the thing is a fake, but has a hunch that it is. I am in hopes that Father can suggest something we can do. I've written him about it."

"That was a good idea, Sam," said Tom. "I'd like to help, but we want to keep quiet about it so Hastings and his partner won't know we are against him."

"Here we are," cried Sam as they stopped

at Captain Nickerson's. "I'll hustle and get into my old clothes."

"Put on the oldest you have," called Tom.

"I don't see the need of it, I can watch a fire just as well in these clothes."

"Watch it!" exclaimed Tom. "Why, man alive, you're going to fight it and from the looks of the smoke piling up over there we won't have any cinch."

Sam rushed into the house and in a few moments returned dressed in his fishing rig.

"There, that's better. Now, we'll drive around by my house and I can change up."

"I didn't have any idea we were going to fight the fire. Up home you can't get anywhere near the fire. The department does all the fighting."

"Every able-bodied man is part of our department," laughed Tom, jumping out of the auto and rushing into the house. "Run in the barn and get some shovels," he called from the doorway.

"Shovels," said Sam to himself, thoroughly mystified. "What on earth does he want of shovels?"

"Good bye, Mother," called Tom, as he dashed from the house.

"Good bye, son, be careful now," said Mrs. Stearns, coming out to the car.

"This is Sam Hotchkiss, Mother. He's staying at Uncle Seth's."

"Oh yes, you were there last summer, weren't you?"

"Yes, Mrs. Stearns."

"You must come over some time, Sam. Now, be careful, both of you."

"What on earth do you take the shovels for?" asked Sam, who couldn't connect garden tools with woods fires.

"We'll use them to beat out the flames with. You'll see when we get there. Gee! look at that smoke roll up," said Tom.

The sound of automobile horns interrupted the conversation and two large touring cars, filled with men, roared by them. Sam saw that they, too, carried shovels.

"Fellows are turning out pretty well," remarked Tom, as he opened the throttle wider. "Been awful dry for a month, and now some blamed fool has dropped a cigarette in the

woods and set 'em going like tinder. Not any very big stuff growing in these woods, but the fire sweeps along so fast, in this southwest wind, that it will hit some of those farm houses before we know it."

"You have been through this thing before, have you, Tom?" asked Sam.

"You bet I have," said he, as he steered by a pair of horses attached to a farm wagon.

"They must be very choice of that plow they have in the wagon," laughed Sam. "They are hurrying as though they want to get it out of the danger zone."

"That's a part of the fire apparatus," explained Tom. "They plow furrows ahead of the fire, and unless the wind is pretty strong, the fire is checked when it comes to the open furrows. They have to do all kinds of things. Lucky the Saquoit river runs so near. That may help."

They were now in the blackened area and presently Tom stopped the flivver and hopped out remarking, "Here's where we get off."

"Can't we drive along further?" asked Sam. "There isn't any fire here to fight."

"I don't want to get on the other side of the wind and have the old boat burn up. This is safe because there's nothing left here to burn," said Tom.

The boys seized their implements and ran off down the road in the direction of the clouds of smoke.

"Hold on, Sam," panted Tom. "What's your hurry?"

"Why, I thought we wanted to get there as soon as we could," answered Sam.

"Sure, we do, but the real fire is probably quite a way off and we don't want to get winded so we won't be able to fight once we get there. This will be a long job, unless the wind shifts or it rains, and we shall need all the endurance we have," explained Tom.

They advanced at a more leisurely pace and Tom explained further the general method of dealing with woods fires. He told Sam of how they back fired to check the rushing flames and the danger of being caught, if

a person were between the back fire and the original fire line.

"You see, Sam," Tom went on, "the ground is decayed vegetable matter for quite a depth and this burns like peat for weeks sometimes unless it is stopped by heavy rains. Sometimes, we think it is all out, then it breaks forth again. That's why men patrol the woods for days after a fire is supposed to be cold."

"How about the look-out towers on the hills with their maps of the country?" asked Sam. "I visited the one on Shootflying Hill last summer and their scheme of laying off the country into zones was great."

"They help a pile," agreed Tom. "Fires are discovered earlier and the telephone can do wonders. Woods fires well started are cruel things. It's all so needless, too, for they are generally set by some ninny who drives by and throws a lighted match or a cigarette butt into bushes at the side of the road."

The two boys could now get glimpses of the flames shooting up the pitch-filled pine trees,

and figures, indistinct through the smoke, beating with spades or brush. Men were running here and there and their shouting excited the boys to hurry along.

"I guess here's where we begin," said Tom. "Let's find out for sure, if they want us to start with this gang."

"Jump in here, boys," wheezed a man, who was beating the flames with a bough.

A pail half full of water stood nearby. Tom dipped his handkerchief in this water and bound it about his nose and mouth, tying it in the back. Sam followed suit.

"Now, at it, boy," yelled Tom.

The air was full of flying sparks and cinders. The ground felt hot to Sam's feet as he smashed away with a will. With a roar flames would rush to the top of a pine tree, dry and inflammable as gun powder. Trees were falling all around the two boys. The flames were extinguished in one spot, only to break forth somewhere else. Frantically the men and boys toiled.

Sam exulted in the contest. His teeth were set with determination to win against the piti-

less foe. He began to think of the fire as a wild beast to be subdued, as he scuffed and smashed at the flames.

"You will, will you," he gasped, as he beat out a tongue of flame creeping near a fine young tree.

For the first time in his life he realized the menace of fire. Hitherto he had thought of a fire as an interesting thing to watch, but now, he had a different feeling. He thought of the small farm buildings in its path where perhaps the children were anxiously watching the brave mother packing up her most precious keepsakes.

"You're a bear cat, no mistake," grunted a man near him, who was going at it more slowly and making every blow tell.

Sam studied this man's method and found that he was wearing himself out needlessly and calmed down a bit.

"Here, over here," yelled Tom, who was combating a new burst of flames in a fresh section. Sam ran over and together they beat at the flames.

The handkerchiefs were dry by this time

and they dipped them in the luke warm water and went at it again. What a blessed feeling that wet handkerchief was!

A truck load of fire fighters now drove up and with the added crew Sam and Tom felt fresh courage. They skirted farther along the edge of the fire line. Tiny flames that amounted to nothing, at first, burst into a roaring, blistering heat.

Both boys had fought along the fire line so far that the other men were left behind. With desperation they struggled, scrambling about over the roots and stumps. So absorbed were they in exterminating the enemy that they worked around and met the flames as they advanced.

"Gee, Sam," Tom gasped, as one leg sank in the porous ground beside a small tree trunk.

Sam reached to help him up but Tom groaned and fell back. His foot was caught fast under a root.

"I guess I've hurt my ankle," said Tom, and his face blanched.

Sam began to dig frantically around the foot.

"Back fire! Back fire!" came the cry from the rear. Sam remembered what Tom had told him about a back fire being started to meet the original fire after plowing the furrows. The flames were creeping nearer and nearer from the front, and soon the air at the back became smoky, and Sam knew for a certainty that a fire was closing in on them from that quarter.

The first thing to do was to extricate Tom's foot. Sam dug and shovelled. He tried pulling the foot but Tom grunted with pain.

What should he do? Yell for help? The noise of the crackling flames would drown out any feeble attempt of his to be heard. He must get Tom out himself.

He thought of Uncle Seth and the many experiences he had related of men who got out of tight places. "They could do it. I can do it," said Sam to himself, as he struggled.

The foot came free.

"Glory be!" muttered Sam.

Sam helped Tom regain his feet, or rather foot, for his injured member would not bear

his weight. With his arm around his companion he started. Which way should he go? He felt Tom a dead weight. He had fainted. It was no mean weight, but Sam, with the strength which often comes to persons in desperation, dragged him on. He saw a place ahead where the flames seemed to be advancing more slowly. Dragging Tom toward this, he laid him down and beat at the flames to make an avenue of escape. He knew better than to try the backward path for the back fire was burning fiercely. Here was the line of attack for him to follow.

Smash! Thud! his spade thrashed at the enemy.

Sam's breath came in short choking gasps. Oh, for a swallow of that lukewarm water. His foot hit against metal. It was the pail in which they had dipped their handkerchiefs. Thank God, the men had forgotten it! There was a little in the bottom of the pail. He raised his pail to his lips and then he paused. No! that might revive Tom. The hot, smoke-filled air might have injured him and besides he was hurt. What was he thinking of? He

was all right. Tom was the one that needed the water. With staring eyes which felt stiff and unnatural, he lifted the pail and allowed the water to trickle over his companion's face. Tom's eyes fluttered open and he struggled to get to his feet.

"Steady, Tom," cautioned Sam. "Can you stand on one foot? I'll help you."

Sam placed his arms under the other boy and drew him upon his back. Half dragging and half carrying Tom, heavier than himself, he passed through the avenue of safety that he had made, out to the charred ground, hot to his feet.

Could he make the road? His knees were strangely weak and uncertain. He dragged on, a step at a time, with the limp burden upon his back. Sam gritted his teeth and hitched along. He scarcely knew which way to go but his befogged senses told him straight ahead.

He thought he heard shouting which sounded like cheers and at that moment he felt some rain drops upon his head. That was it; the rain had come to quench the fire. Sam

didn't care much. It was this load that bothered him. What was it? Oh, yes, he remembered it was Tom, and he must keep on.

A few of the fire fighters, who had been relieved from duty, as the fire was now under control, saw a staggering figure with another figure limp upon his back, making his way slowly and stumblingly along. Both faces were blackened, the eyebrows and hair singed.

Sam was relieved of that terrible load which had been bearing him down for so long and then there was a jolting: the air blew across his face, blessed, cool air. He was being carried into Uncle Seth's yard.

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CHAPTER VI

STRATEGY

IN two days Sam was none the worse for his experience and was able to be with Uncle Seth working on the new boat. Tom's ankle mended rapidly and though he limped, he kept about.

"Who is this chap you are building the boat for, Uncle Seth?" asked Sam, as they rubbed away with sandpaper, smoothing the surface of the cat boat.

"I tell ye, Sam," said the old man, "every single feller that has seen this boat has asked me the same question. They are all jest as curious about it as a cat about a live lobster. I ain't told 'em, jest because they are so curious and I ain't goin' to tell you yit, 'cause if you don't know you can tell folks so honestly, when they ask you about it."

"They won't ask me about it," said Sam.

"They won't?" grinned the old man. "That shows you don't know 'em. They'll do it jest as sure as the world. It don't really make a bit of difference whether they know or not, but sence they want to find out so much, I'm goin' to be mean and not tell 'em."

Sam felt a little peeved that Uncle Seth wouldn't trust him with a secret, but he tried not to show it and said, "All right, Uncle Seth, it doesn't matter."

"That feller Hastings was around to see me again yesterday," remarked the old Captain.

"Wanted you to sell your grant, I suppose, and buy stock in the company," said Sam.

"Sartin," returned Uncle Seth blandly. "Told me I was missin' the opportunity of a lifetime and so on. He also hinted that I was considerbul moss covered," he chuckled.

Sam stopped his work and his eyes blazed. "Why didn't you kick him out, Uncle Seth? I'd like to club him. Did you order him out of the shop?"

"No, no, Sam," said the old man smiling,

"you don't think that would have been real polite, do ye?"

"Polite, be hanged!" exploded the boy. "I just wish I could have him ridden out of town. He makes me mad clear through, down here trying to get your grants away from you and get the little savings of the people. If I was in your place I'd have shown him where he got off."

"Now, Sam," said Uncle Seth gently, "jest how do you think any sech measures as you suggest would help git at the bottom of things. I don't know for sure that all this promotin' ain't all above board. I don't think it is, but how do I know? I'm aimin' to do all I can, but I want to hear all the feller has to say and see if I can't git him some other way than maulin' him over the head with a marlin spike. What is it they call it? Strategy, yes, that's it.

"I remember a mare Wen Holbrook traded for once," he continued. "She was as purty a little mare as you ever see. She was sleek and mild lookin' as a kitten. The feller he

gut her of said she was quicker'n a pickerel; you couldn't spit on her, she was so quick. Wal, after Wen had her a couple er days he found out that she was quick when she wanted to be, and when she didn't, she wouldn't move at all. Balky, that's the long and short of it.

"Wen knowed he was stuck. Over on the river road one day she jest stopped and looked 'round at Wen kinder meek like, but with a look in her eye that said 'Wal, what are ye goin' to do about it?'

"Now Wen was a hoss trader and knew all the kinks of the business, includin' what to do for balky hosses. He touched the mare up a leetle with the whip but it done no good. If he'd been like some fellers he'd have got mad and whaled that hoss but he didn't do that. He jest hitched the mare to a tree that was right beside of her and started and walked home.

"I reckon the mare thought that was the funniest sort of a chap she'd ever run up against. She'd been used to the rarin' kind that built fires under her and all sech folderol.

"After a while Wen come back and had one of them old fashioned telephones that you ring by turnin' a crank. He put that on the floor of the buggy and took a wire and scrapin' one end of it hitched it to the mare's ear. Then he run it back and bent it on the telephone. He took another wire and hitched that onto the thick of her tail and run that back to the instrument.

"You know, one of them telephones has a generator or whatever you call it and when you turn the crank there's considerbul of a shock comin' to the feller that has holt of wires runnin' out from it jest right.

"Wal, suh," laughed the Captain, "I reckon when Wen clucked to the mare and she wouldn't budge he was grinnin' some to himself. He jest reached down and give the crank a twist and Jimmynetty! warn't that mare surprised. That was the most curious ticklin' she'd ever had, I reckon. She begun to take an interest in life right away. He clucked to her again nice and quiet but she hadn't had enough, so he give quite a long turn to the crank this time.

"She begun to sidle 'round to see what the Sam Hill was causin' all them funny little feelin's to be caperin' the whole length of her. She didn't like it real well.

"About the third er fourth whirrin' of that telephone and she decided to do as he told her, and git ap, and she never had a notion of stoppin' till she gut into the barn.

"Didn't she ever balk after that?" asked Sam, laughing.

"She tried it after that, once or twice, but all Wen had to do was to reach down and whirr that crank, without any wires nor nothin' hitched to her and she'd remember and go right along about her business. She made him a mighty fine drivin' horse, didn't need no whirrin' nor nothin'.

"Now, Sam, that was goin' about a job with strategy. It's all right to git haired up and have fireworks if that's the best way to handle a thing, but lots of times it don't do any good and you don't git what you're after."

"You think, then, that we ought to use strategy with this man Hastings, Uncle Seth?" asked Sam.

"Sartin' I do," answered the old man promptly.

"But there isn't anything we can do. I wish I could hear from Father. It's time I got a letter. I don't see a thing we can do with this promoter except bounce on him hard, and, as you say, that won't do any good. Why don't you let it all go? What's the use?"

"Sam," began Uncle Seth, grinning quizzically, "I'll have to tell you about Debby Scudder, Jacob Scudder's wife. Debby believed in lettin' things take their course. Foller the line of least resistance was her motto. If there was too many difficulties about doin' Monday's wash she'd wait till Tuesday, and if on Tuesday sunthin' come up to dampen her courage, she'd wait another day and so on. She wasn't shiftless in particular, but jest hadn't a mite of courage to tackle anything that was a trifle harder than she was accustomed to.

"Wal, Jacob needed quite a lot of encouragement, but he didn't git it to home, I tell ye. Everything he undertook she was

allus throwin' cold water on it and sayin' he ought not to tackle it. Now among Jacob's other afflictions he had asthma once in a while so's it bothered him to work around, he was so short breathed.

"One day he come into the house and slumped down in a chair wheezin' and sighin', all beat out, poor critter.

" 'Oh, Debby,' says he, 'it don't seem as though I could take another breath.'

" 'Wal, Jacob,' says Debby, 'I wouldn't try.' "

"That's a good one," laughed Sam. "I see what you mean, all right, but after all, what can we do?"

"I'll tell ye, Sam, I mean to be jest as pleasant to that feller Hastings as can be. If I can keep him guessin', jest as he's kept me, why that'll be the thing. What we'll do after that depends sunthin' on what your father writes. He knows about corporations and sech and I'll bank a good deal on his say so. About those things I'm as ignorant as time. I've gut only one idea about these 'ere stock companies and that is that they're out to git

suckers. While they'll try to make ye believe they've got a tender feelin' for ye and want ye to make lots er money and git rich quick, I can't help feelin' all the time that they are sunthin' like Abe Scannell.

"Abe lives all alone with a yaller dog and in the cold winter weather Abe lets the dog sleep in the bed with him.

" 'Yer see,' says Abe, 'that fool dog thinks he's gittin' warm along side of me in bed, but I'm playin' it on him good, instid of gittin' warm himself, he's warmin' me all the time.' "

CHAPTER VII

THE CAPTURE

IT was a week after the fire. Sam was coming out of the post office when Tom drove up.

“See here, Sam,” he called. “I hear there were things happening at the fire that we didn’t know anything about. The fire swept over several stills in the woods and they blew up. We didn’t hear the explosions, but they came just the same. They have rounded up the fellows who were running the stills and they are in Bainrich jail. They come up for trial today. Let’s go over and see the excitement.”

Tom and Sam were now fast friends, though Tom didn’t at all take Uncle Seth’s place as a companion, for his farming took most of his time. Tom and his mother, both, had made a great fuss, so Sam called it, about Sam drag-

ging Tom out of the fire line to safety. Mrs. Stearns invited him up to supper and talked about it all the time. Sam could not help liking Tom's mother, but he did wish she wouldn't make such a stir over what he had done.

"All right, wait till I tell Uncle Seth," said Sam.

"Ask him to come along, too," called Tom.

"Sure, I'll come with you fellers," said Uncle Seth, "Cynthy has gone over to Masonville with Mis' Davis and her son in their automobile, and said we'd have to keep bachelor's hall and get our own dinner. We'll git dinner somewhere on the road instead. I've been wantin' to see how much that forest fire burned over."

"You know, Uncle Seth," said Tom, "I've a hunch that that fire was set."

"Mebbe it was, Tom," said the old man, "but tell me why in the world a man would want to set fire to scrub pine and red oak. It ain't good for much, to be sure, but what would anybuddy want to burn it up for?"

"Some things that I have heard make me

think that it was set, jest the same," persisted Tom.

"If you know anything, Tom, it's kinder your duty to tell about it, ain't it?" asked Uncle Seth.

"If I knew anything, yes. I don't know; but, as I said, I have a hunch that if I was going to try to find out who set that fire, I'd watch any fellow that was specially keen on deer hunting."

"Why, Tom," broke in Sam, "what in the world has deer hunting to do with burning over the woods? It's close time on the deer, anyway, isn't it?"

"There's about a week open in the year, and, more than that, Uncle Seth and I know well enough that there's plenty of deer shooting all the fall and winter on the sly. They hunt deer with dogs and use shot guns. If a warden sees them in the woods with guns and dogs they explain that they are after rabbits."

"That's right, Sam," corroborated Uncle Seth. "It's a mean way to go after a deer with dogs. The deer doesn't have much of a chance and with shot guns and buck shot there

must be a lot of 'em wounded that the hunters don't kill. Purty harsh sport, I call it."

"I don't understand yet, why the fire had anything to do with shooting," protested Sam.

"You see, Sam," explained Tom, "after the wood is burned over the tender young shoots spring up, rank: nature's way of redecorating the place. Didn't you ever notice how green the grass is after a piece of grassland has been burned over? Well, that's the way it is in the woods. The ashes act as fertilizer, and it isn't but a little while before the dark burned ground is covered with the brightest green, and the tenderest young shoots, that make rich feed for the deer and it calls them into that section."

"Oh, I see, it is about the same as decoys for birds," said Sam.

"Jest about the same," said Uncle Seth. "I don't have much use for either one. I couldn't shoot a deer any more than I could a young child. Did ye ever see a deer wild in the woods, Sam?"

"No, I never did."

"Wal, they're about the purtiest thing that

ever travelled, ain't they, Tom? There's a lot of 'em on Cape Cod, and like as not you'll run on to some in your cruises about. When you see deer leapin' and runnin' and wavin' their white flag—"

"Now, you're joking, Uncle Seth," laughed Sam.

"No," said Tom, "that's right; when they run, they flip up their little stub of a tail and the under side is white."

"Sort of a flag of truce, isn't it?" said Sam.

"Yes," said Uncle Seth. "Only folks don't respect it. I declare, the feller that was mean enough to fire a piece of woods in order to decoy deer in here in the fall, is mean enough to skin a muskeeter for his hide and taller."

"Here's a cross road that will go through the woods and take us pretty near where the fire was," remarked Tom, as he turned the car.

About a half mile along this road, they came to the edge of the burned piece and the furrows that had stopped the progress of the flames. Tom stopped the car, and they all looked silently at the cruel devastation. The

contrast was marked; the rich green and, bordering that, the blackened area with the stumps of what were growing trees, now charred and ugly.

Suddenly Sam turned and whispered to his companions, "Look over there, quick."

The car had stopped behind a small clump of bushes. As Sam pointed, a wisp of white smoke rose, a hundred yards or so in from the road, in the unburned area; and they saw indistinctly through the growth the figure of a man moving stealthily about.

"The sun of a gun," muttered Sam, as he jumped from the auto, with Tom close at his heels.

"What ye aimin' to do?" whispered Uncle Seth.

"Go get him," whispered back both boys.

Uncle Seth climbed out of the car with surprising agility. "Guess I'd better take a hand in this fracas," he chuckled. "You boys stay back of me," said he, as he picked up a fence stake.

"You go around the other side of him, Uncle Seth," said Sam, who thought the old man

might get hurt, if he boldly approached the fire brand.

They had crouched low during the conference.

"What, me go around in back of a feller, Sam? That ain't the way I was brought up. The feller that is skunk enough to set a woods fire is a coward, in the fust place, you can bank on that; and even if he warn't, I reckon I've gut a few whallops I'd jest like to land on him," and the old fellow's eyes blazed in anger.

"He's sure to run when he sees you coming," said Tom, "and if somebody goes around him, they can most likely head him off."

"Then you fellers do the runnin' 'round, I ain't so spry runnin' as I was once," said the Captain.

Tom and Sam started off up the road and ran like deer; and when they judged they had gone far enough, they ran at right angles, making but little noise over the carpet of pine needles.

"Here's another road," panted Tom. "Runs parallel to the one we were on."



“Lie still thar, ye swab; or I’ll bump this
here agin yer head.”

"There's an auto," said Sam.

"I'll bet it belongs to that fellow," said Tom.

There seemed very little doubt of it, so they quickly took out the spark plugs and hid them on the ground. They did no more, wishing to make haste, for they felt sure Uncle Seth would have a hard time if the fire bug started to be nasty.

On they ran. No shouts came to them through the woods—no running footsteps nor crackling of twigs. What if he had killed Uncle Seth, went through the minds of both boys.

Sam gritted his teeth and vowed if any harm had come to the old man, that he would hunt the villain down and kill him with his own hands. He pictured himself slowly choking the murderer, as he clenched his fists and ran on.

"Was that a cry for help?" panted Tom.

"We're coming, Uncle Seth," Sam shouted.

The yelling now came to them more distinctly. "Lie still thar, ye swab; or I'll bump this here agin yer head."

The boys sprang into the thin growth; and there was Uncle Seth sitting astride a squirming figure, wielding the fence stake and flourishing it about.

"Oh, here ye be," he grinned. "Didn't know but what you'd gut scared and run off. Ketch hold of this feller's legs, or I swan I'll have to lambaste him some more. As old a sailor as I be, he bumps around so it fairly makes me sea sick."

Sam sprang in a nose dive for the kicking feet of the under man, and Uncle Seth arose with the remark, "Thar now, you're goin' to answer some purty p'inted questions. Who be ye, and where do you hail from?" There was no response from the captive. "I had to hit him purty hard to keep him quiet while I put out the fire," he apologized, "but the dog-goned fool was so persistent in wantin' to run off, that I had to lay him out: and swear, don't talk, how that feller did swear! He was most as bad as Lem Stoddard over to Masonville, only he wasn't nigh so awkward about it; he's had practice, this bird has."

"What'll we do with him, Uncle Seth?" asked Sam.

"Take him along with us to the courthouse. Reckon we can make it a real nice leetle party," chuckled the old sailor.

"I ain't had such a good time as this sence,—"

What had been his previous good time, was cut short by the snarls of the prisoner.

"Youse ain't gut no right to take me to court, youse ain't no sheriff, now let me go you old—"

"Shet up," hollered the old Captain, rapping him smartly with the fence stake. "There's my authority, right here in this club." The boys looked wonderingly and a little fearfully thinking that perhaps the old seaman had gotten himself in a bad hole.

"Accordin' to law, any man has a right to arrest another when he's committin' a crime, and, if you warn't committin' one, I never see anybuddy that was. I have a good notion to take the law right inter my own hands."

"Youse ain't gut no warrant for arrestin'

me, and youse know it," yelled the man. "I warn't doin' a t'ing but cookin' my breakfast."

"I reckon the warrant will be forthcomin' when we git over to the jail and I tell my story. Don't yer fret about the warrant. If I thought there was ary chance of your gittin' clear, I'd maul ye right now so you couldn't tell yer face from a rump steak."

Sam, to whom Uncle Seth was the mildest of old men, stared with open mouth to think Uncle Seth could roar and bang a man over the head with such abandon. He remembered, though, that the old man had been a whaler in his day; and no doubt had men far more desperate among his crews than this creature.

"You fellers can git up now. I've gut my wind and if he starts to so much as wiggle an ear, I'll fix him all up nice fer the coroner to take charge of."

"Tom, you run over to your car and git a piece or two er rope ter truss this 'ere critter up with."

"There is a car over on the other road," said Sam. "Perhaps that belongs to him."

"Don't you touch that car," yelled the prisoner, "that's mine."

"Whang!" went the club; and further speech was just grunts and gurgles.

"Ain't quite tamed yit, be ye? I guess I'll gag ye and done with it. Oh, here's the rope. Now, boys, you tie him up as I tell ye; and, if he starts to cut up, I'll jest quiet him with this." When the ropes were adjusted to the old man's satisfaction, he placed a gag in the prisoner's mouth and tied it securely behind his ears.

"Thar now, I guess ye won't be sayin' sō many naughty things," he grinned. "I've left him warp enough so't he can walk, if he don't take too long steps. Forrud march."

"How about his car?" asked Sam.

"That's so. We ought to take that along too. I can't drive one of the things. I wouldn't know her jib boom from her spanker, and like as not she'd jibe with me."

"I can drive most any car, Uncle Seth," said Sam.

"Wal, go ahead: we'll meet ye out at the main road."

Sam replaced the spark plugs, and tried the self starter. It was in good order. "Quite a boat," remarked Sam to himself, as he threw it into gear and sped down the woods road. As he turned into the main highway, he let her out, for he looked back in vain for Tom's car.

"Must have beat me to it," he thought, "I'll see what she'll do."

He had but little time to "see what she would do," for, at a turn in the road ahead, a man holding a double barrel shot gun to his shoulder stepped out of the bushes, and throwing open his vest showed a nickel star the size of a small saucer.

"Stop, in the name of the law," he yelled.

Sam applied the brakes, and stopped. "Pinched for speeding," he thought.

"Naow, yew put them hands of you'rn up; and, by godfreys grapevine! yew keep 'em up tew; I'm goin' to search yew for congealed weapins."

"I haven't any weapons—" Sam began.

"Yew don't pull anything like that on Azariah Jackson: yew may have fooled them

Boston policemen, but don't yew try any of yer tricks on me, or I'll fill yew so full er buck shot ye'd make a ballast fer a schooner."

"Who do you think I am?" asked Sam, who was beginning to get anxious about the man's sanity.

"Don't yew fret about who ye be. I know ye, though I thought yew was older. Sheriff over ter Bainrich gut the number and description of yer car and all about it. Yer game is up, Mister Herman Lewis, or whatever yer called yerself last."

"That isn't my name and I don't know—"

"That'll be all of that. Didn't carry no gun. Thought you didn't need it, eh, down here among the hicks. Yew didn't reckon on runnin' up agin yours truly," he cackled.

"We'll take all these things along," he said, doing up Sam's pocket book and watch in a piece of paper bag, and stowing the package away in his hip pocket.

"Naow where was yew aimin' fer, when I hauled ye up?" he asked.

"County jail," answered Sam, and he couldn't help grinning.

"Jail!" the constable ejaculated, his mouth agape, "wal, Mister Smarty, heh! heh! heh! yew can keep right on the way, and I'll ride along with ye. Only don't forget this, I've gut a gun p'inted right where yew digest yer victuals, and there's likely to be sunthin' happen, if you cut up any gum games."

When they arrived at the court house there was quite a crowd in front. Sam looked about in vain for Uncle Seth and Tom, but they were nowhere in sight. He begun to feel decidedly uncomfortable.

"I've gut him," announced the constable to the assembled crowd. "I've gut my man. I never went arter ary a one that I didn't fetch in, yit," he bragged. "Whar's Sheriff Barnes?"

With the gun pointing in the middle of his back, Sam was propelled up the steps of the old building with every eye upon him. He felt that his face was the color of an overripe tomato.

"Why, he's nothing but a boy," one man in the crowd said. "They certainly come young nowadays."

CHAPTER VIII

THE REWARD

ABOUT the time Sam was being locked in a cell in the old county jail, Uncle Seth and Tom, with their prisoner, drove up to the courthouse.

"There's Sam's car," remarked Uncle Seth, as he opened the tonneau door to assist the prisoner to alight. "He beat us to it. I thought that puncture of our'n would fix it so's he would git here ahead of us, but I didn't know but he would wait on the main road."

The old Captain and Tom sought out the high sheriff, and found him in his office receiving a report from one Azariah Jackson, constable, who had intercepted Sam, a half hour before.

"Yes, suh, Sheriff," he was saying, as Uncle Seth and Tom waited at the open door, "he was as desperate and cool headed a criminal

as it ever wuz my pleasure to haul in. Told me he wuz on his way to the county jail. Sez I, 'Young feller,' lookin' at him purty keen, 'you're jest er shoutin' you're goin' to jail, and I'm goin' ter take ye.' At that he tried ter pull er gun, or at least slid his hand towards his hip pocket—"

"We didn't find any gun on him, Azariah," interrupted the high sheriff.

"Wal, no, so ye didn't," stammered the officer, in some confusion, "mebbe he didn't have one, but I thought he wuz goin' to pull one. He acted suspicious, very suspicious, Sheriff."

Sheriff Jim Barnes now saw the three waiting at the open door.

"Hello, Cap'n Seth," he said. "What have you got here?"

"I've gut a varmint that wuz settin' fire to the woods over Masonville way, and I thought ye might like to have him board with ye a spell. We gut him with his automobile."

"Come in and sit down," invited the sheriff. "I suppose you know that we've already caught the one that set the woods fires. A

fellow from Sangusset, who wanted to have some deer shooting."

Uncle Seth and Tom looked at each other in blank amazement.

"Wal, Sheriff, I guess I've made a mistake. But I tell ye this feller had a fire started—" he began.

"I tol yer," snapped the prisoner, "that I was cookin' my breakfast. I ain't no arson guy. Now, kin I go, Sheriff?"

"Just a moment," said Sheriff Barnes quietly. "I want to ask you a few questions. What was the number of your automobile?"

"I ain't got no automo—"

"You're a tarnation liar," broke in Uncle Seth excitedly, "you told us down in the woods that that was your car in the other road. He's lyin', Sheriff; either now, or he was lyin' then."

The sheriff looked at the prisoner carefully and then thumbed over some papers before him. "Left fore finger cut off at the first joint, gold tooth," he mused. "Well, we could take you in for having a fire without a permit, anyway, so you can't go quite yet; but

I think there is a friend of yours outside who will want to see you."

He called a deputy and talked to him in low tones. The man went out, and directly a big broad shouldered man was framed by the doorway. He smiled at the prisoner, and came forward with a hand outstretched.

"Well, well, look who's here; mornin' Snappy."

The prisoner's face blanched for a second; then he smiled ruefully and said, "Good mornin', Sarge. For the love er Pete, how did youse git here? Didn't know yer ever made the hick towns."

"Down here for my health, Snappy; been fishin'; and look what a fish I caught. I caught Snappy Lewis, one of the slickest check kitters that ever slung ink."

"You know him, do you, Sergeant?" asked Sheriff Barnes.

"Know him? I guess I do; and I may say that the Bankers' Protective Association is offerin' a thousand for him. I congratulate you, Sheriff, on landin' him. I think you

could afford, with that thousand comin' to you, to pass around the cigars."

"The truth is, I didn't land him at all. Cap'n Seth Nickerson and this young man brought him in. Sergeant Brooks of the Boston Police Department, Cap'n Nickerson; and I don't know your name, young man," he said, turning to Tom.

"Tom Stearns, sir," said Tom, who was staring with wonder at the city officer and the prisoner.

"Wal, now, Sheriff," said the Captain, "we had another friend with us, and he came this way in this feller's auto. The auto is outside, and, if you'll excuse me, I guess I'll go and look him up."

"What is his name?" asked the sheriff quickly.

"Sam Hotchkiss," replied Uncle Seth.

"By George, I believe it's the same one. Boy about sixteen or seventeen? That blundering constable— Hey, Jim, bring in that young feller Azariah held up," he shouted.

In a few moments Sam was ushered in. He

was not only angry, but a good deal worried, for everything seemed to be against him. The number and description of the car was the same as the one the police had been told to watch for, belonging to one "Snappy" Lewis, noted forger. Altogether, things were not looking well for Sam. Of course as soon as Uncle Seth and Tom showed up, the muddle would be cleared up; but the delay was nerve racking for a boy.

Sam rushed to Uncle Seth and shook his hands. "I never was so glad to see anybody in my life. They locked me up, Uncle Seth."

Uncle Seth and the two boys told their story, and everything was explained to the satisfaction of the officers of the law.

"Cap'n," said the Sergeant to Uncle Seth, "you've got your nerve with you. Do I understand that you wasn't heeled?"

"What do mean, heeled?" asked the old man.

"I mean you carried no gun," explained the officer. "Did you know that my friend Snappy was a gunman? I wouldn't have

come up against him unless I had a gun in each hand. Didn't he have a gun on him?"

"Oh, yes, I fergut," said Uncle Seth apologetically, as he fished in his hip pocket, "this belongs to him," and he drew forth an ugly looking automatic. "The cuss tried to pull that on me, and it made me mad, I tell ye. I knocked it out of his hand with a fence stake. I warn't goin' to have no feller p'int a gun at me, I've had too many try that on me. There's nuthin' that makes me see red like that. I plumb fergut it, and I'd have carried it off with me sure's the world, and like as not been arrested for stealin', myself," he chuckled.

"Fer the love of Mike," ejaculated the Sergeant, "Snappy, were you sleepy this mornin' or what?"

"I didn't want to croak the guy, and I didn't think he'd pull any rough stuff. T'ought I could make him run at a sight of the iron. Nervy ol' geezer slipped me one on the mitt and another on the bean," he grinned shamefacedly.

"A thousand dollars," mused Uncle Seth

as they rode home. "You fellers better take that money, I was jest a passenger, and it was—"

"No, you don't," exclaimed both boys.

"You ought to have the whole of the reward," protested Tom. "You did it all."

"Sure, you ought," seconded Sam.

"Now, now, that's mighty nice of you boys, but to tell ye the truth, I don't need any money ter speak of. I've gut 'bout everything I need, and, besides, I don't mind tellin' you in confidence that I've gut considerbul money anyway,—more'n me and Aunt Cynthy will ever need, likely."

"Well, I shan't touch a cent of the money unless you take your share, Uncle Seth," said Tom stoutly. "We didn't do anything."

"That's right," said Sam. "There must be things that you could use the money for."

"Wal, lemme see,—I might buy a new main sheet for the *Cynthy B.*," he said thoughtfully, with a twinkle in his eye, "and then I s'pose I do need a new pair of hip boots; yes, I'll take it, boys."

CHAPTER IX

A SLIPPERY PIECE OF WOOD

AS Sam was dressing the next morning, he heard Captain Nickerson rattling the covers of the kitchen stove as he built the fire. Suddenly, the old man began to sing in a deep, ponderous bass:

“With a stamp and a go
And a Yo Heave ho.”

When he came to the “stamp,” he brought his foot down with a resounding thump upon the floor. He sang these two lines over and over again, and, if he calculated to have his vocal effort act as an alarm clock, he succeeded, for, as Sam ran down stairs, Aunt Cynthia bustled into the “settin’ ” room from her adjoining bedroom. “Guess Uncle Seth is feeling happy about the reward,” said Sam.

“Good mornin’, Sam,” greeted the old lady, “I allus know, when Seth gits to bellerin’ like

that in the mornin', that he's hungry and wants his breakfast right away."

"Hello, Cynthy," said Uncle Seth, "didn't know as you was goin' to git up before noon. Here 'tis almost six o'clock. Hello, Sam, you jest crawlin' out, too? Wal, if you and your Aunt Cynthy ain't the sleepy heads!" he chuckled.

To Sam, who was in the habit at home of breakfasting around eight, this wasn't so very late. Uncle Seth grinned and chuckled, as he saw Sam's evident discomfort. "Don't take it so hard, Sam, I ain't been up but about fifteen minutes myself."

"Cynthy," he called, "do you know I have a hankerin' for waffles and some of that genuine maple syrup I had sent down from New Hampshire."

"I'll stir some up in a minute, Seth, you'll have to eat this omelet fust, or 'twill fall and git soggy."

"With a stamp and—" began Uncle Seth again, but his wife cut him short.

"Seth Nickerson, do stop that racket, you're

wuss'ern a boy. The neighbors'll think you've took leave of your senses."

"All right, Mother," he said, "but bring on sunthin' to eat, for as the old feller said, over to Nantucket, when he come in for dinner, 'I've come with a swept hold.'" As Uncle Seth attacked the huge fluffy omelet and then the hot brown waffles, it was very evident to Sam that the old Captain had not been romancing.

"There, suh," he declared, "I feel better. I snum, Cynthy, the longer you cook victuals, the better you do it." At which his wife said, "You go on, Seth," but the look she gave him belied her apparent impatience at his compliment.

He went out toward the shop droning what was to Sam unintelligible jargon. It went like this:

"Cuttyhunk
Penikese
Nashawena
Pasquenese
Naushon

Nonamesset

Woods Hole

Succonesset

George Lovell and Z. D. Bassett."

"What's all that you're saying, Uncle Seth?" laughed Sam, as he hurried after him.

"That, Samuel," said Uncle Seth with an elaborate drawl, "is one of the coastin' classics of Vineyard Sound. If you will look at the map of Vineyard Sound, you will see them names. They are p'int and islands on the way from New York, after you leave Block Island and strike into the Vineyard. You will notice that they rhyme, and one of the fust bits of verse I ever remember was this one."

"The last two are names of people, aren't they?" asked Sam.

"They was the name of two schooners that travelled them waters; and they was on the route so long, and so often, that everybuddy allus met 'em; so, for a joke, we allus put 'em in the rhyme with the other fixtures."

"I'm going to learn that verse," laughed Sam, "and spring it on the boys at home. I'm

not sure that I can spell the names, if I want to write them down."

"To tell the truth, I don't believe I can, either. Better look on one of my charts, that'll give 'em," said Uncle Seth.

"I didn't know you ever went coasting much, Uncle Seth."

"I never did, what you might call much, side of a lot of fellers 'round here. I went when I was a young feller some, between whalin' voyages, jest for recreation. Why, trips to New York and Newport and Maine and Boston was nothin' more than a good time for me. I had lots of fun on them trips, and I warn't away from home but a few days or weeks at a time. That was easy, side of three and five year voyages into the Ar'tic."

"I suppose there were a lot of sailing vessels between Boston and New York then, weren't there, Uncle Seth?" asked the boy, in wonder that coasting on the hazardous shores of New England should be called pleasure trips.

"Yes, a lot of 'em," said the old skipper. "I've seen twenty sails off Gay Head at the

same time. When some of 'em was goin' the same way, then there was fun. If the Cap'ns had any sportin' blood, they'd sure race; and that was racin', lemme tell ye. I've seen six vessels, two masters most of 'em, runnin' fore the wind, boomin' around Cuttyhunk all wung out—"

"Wung out," asked Sam, "what's that? It sounds Chinese."

"Didn't you ever hear that? Why, that is where they're runnin' 'fore the wind, with all sails spread out as near right angles to the vessel as they could git 'em, takin' all the wind there is. You've seen partridges, or pictures of 'em with their feathers all ruffled up? Well, a sailor would say that they was all wung out.

"As I tell ye, they'd sweep across Vineyard Sound, and how the others would cord the feller that got beat, when they got ashore; and he tryin' to find excuses."

"Were you ever in any races coming along, Uncle Seth?" asked Sam.

"Sure, I've been in 'em," laughed the old man half closing his eyes reminiscently.

"I went mate with Cap'n Nehemiah Phinney one summer. We was loadin' granite in Maine, and takin' it to Albany for the new State House. Had good weather most of the time, and a vessel small enough so we didn't have to keep but two men besides ourselves.

"One time we was comin' out of New York. It nattered up some before we gut out into the Sound, and right ahead of us was the schooner *Marthy Bursely*, Zeno Powers cap'n of her. I knew Zeno purty well, and he was allus braggin' about how the *Marthy* could sail,—bragged a lot,—and she could sail, there was no doubt about it.

"Now the *Huntley*, that Cap'n Nehemiah run, could sail, too, lemme tell ye; but he never would take on any of the fellers. He was a modest little man, good as gold, and never done much talkin'. I knew that the *Huntley* was as able a little schooner as ever went out of New York, and I was jest itchin' to try her out against Cap'n Zeno's *Marthy Bursely*, especially since he had allus bragged so about her.

" 'Cap'n,' says I, 'there's Cap'n Zeno in the

Bursely, ahead there a piece. I believe the *Huntley* could run by her and beat her to the mouth of the harbor. What do you say we take him on?’

“ ‘Don’t want to race, Seth,’ says he. ‘To beat him you’d have to run to wind’ard of him, and I don’t ever mean to go to wind’ard of ary vessel. It ain’t good manners.’ That was a fact, he never would run to the wind’ard of a vessel.”

“Do you mean that he thought he would be taking an unfair advantage?” suggested Sam, who was sailor enough to know that a vessel running to the windward of another would likely take the wind out of her sails, and cause her to slow up.

“That’s it, exactly. As the Englishman would say; ‘It ain’t Cricket,’ ” laughed the old man. “Wal, we was goin’ ’fore the wind, all wung out, and I says, ‘Wal, Cap’n, do you mind if I give him a leetle go, if I’ll keep to leeward of him?’

“ ‘Go ahead, Seth, if you want,’ says he. So I took the wheel and give it to her. [We

had all sail set with a good stiff breeze to our backs. We kept creepin' up on the *Marthy Bursely*, and purty soon, Cap'n Zeno see that we was overtakein' him, and he crowded over, so's I'd have to go to the leeward of the *Bursely*. Wal, I intended to, anyway.

"He figgered that, when I gut in the lee of his sails, I'd slow up, and he'd have me. But we was goin' a purty good clip, and I steered her close to his vessel.

" 'Don't run her down,' yelled Cap'n Miah to me.

" 'I ain't goin' to touch her,' says I.

"Zeno was runnin' round on deck of the *Marthy Bursely*, tryin' to do sunthin' more; for he see we was comin' on to him purty fast. It warn't no use; the old *Huntley* jest bristled all her feathers and swept by his lee rail without losing a mite of her headway; and there was Cap'n Zeno dancin' 'round, purty red in the face, and shakin' his fist at us.

"I stepped to the taffrail and flung a rope's end overboard, as though I thought he wanted

a tow; and Jimmynetty! didn't he holler," laughed Captain Nickerson. "He jest couldn't do a thing he was so mad.

"I rubbed my hand along the rail of the old *Huntley*;—we was near enough so's he could see and hear me all right. As I say, I rubbed my hand along the old *Huntley's* rail, and hollers to Cap'n Zeno, 'Slippery piece of wood, this is, Zeno,' says I."

"That must have made him sore," laughed Sam.

"Wal, suh, it did; sore as a bile," chuckled the old Captain. "Wouldn't speak to me for a year; and, do you know, it sorter cured him of braggin'. From that day on, I never heard him say a word about how the *Marthy Bursely* could sail. Never another yip out of him. Oh, that little brush was a dose of medicine that done Zeno a world of good."

CHAPTER X

"SETTIN' TIGHT"

THE next day being rainy, Uncle Seth was busy in the shop working on the new catboat. Sam had found that there was much he could do to help, under Uncle Seth's direction, and he enjoyed it hugely.

"Gee! she's going to look great, Uncle Seth," said Sam. "Isn't she smooth and clean? I think she's a beauty."

"Smooth, I guess she is. When we git through with her, she'll be as smooth as a mouse's ear," said the old man. "Goin' to be a purty snug little craft and no mistake. When I git this ribbon bent on her, she'll be ready for paint. Then we'll have to rig her."

"What a peach of a little cabin!" exclaimed Sam. "Two could sleep aboard her very comfortably."

"Sure, she'd do well enough to stay aboard

of quite a spell. Reckon we'll have to put in some bunks that'll fold up on the wall, outer the way, and then we'll put in a cupboard or so, and a hinged table."

"Have you seen the fellow you're building it for lately?"

"No, not lately. Reckon he'll like the craft, Sam?"

"He couldn't help it, Uncle Seth," said Sam. "I'll bet he doesn't realize how much time and patience it takes to put together such a boat as that."

"Oh, yes, I reckon he does," replied the old man. "He knows sunthin' about boats."

"It makes me fairly homesick to think of this boat going off to a stranger," said Sam wistfully.

"A boat does kinder seem like one of the family after you've tinkered with it a spell, don't it? After you've sailed one a while it seems all the more so. Take the *Cynthy B.*, now, for instance. Don't believe I'd part with that craft for any amount of money."

"I should say not," said Sam, decidedly.

"Had a good offer for her last year, too.

A feller offered me eight hundred dollars fer her," and then the Captain stopped as though he had said more than he intended.

"To change the subject," he continued, "I ain't seen that shellfish combine man around here for quite a spell. Guess he's jest gittin' his wind, 'fore tacklin' me agin to sell my oyster grant."

Just then, Aunt Cynthia poked her head in the door and said, "Mail's come. Here's a letter from yer father, Sam. Guess he must have gut back from the South. I'll wait and see if they're all well."

Sam opened the letter hastily, and, after reading a few lines, he said, "Yes, Aunt Cynthia, they are all well, and send their love to you and Uncle Seth."

"That's good. When they comin' down?"

"Wait a minute, let's see. Oh, here he says, 'We shall be delayed a week or two, but you bet I shall come to the Cape just as soon as it is possible. Tell Uncle Seth to have a big scup already tamed for me to catch, and have Aunt Cynthia lay in a stock of berry pie, a few days before I get there.' "

"Bless his heart," laughed Mrs. Nickerson, "he shall have all the berry pie he wants. Any one that likes wholesome country food the way he does ought to have all he wants. I shan't fergit the good times he and your mother give us when we visited you last winter. They couldn't do too much fer us."

"We liked to have you and Uncle Seth there, all right," said Sam heartily.

"Yes, Sam, I guess ye honestly did," said the old man. "Yer know sometimes country folks visit in the city, and their ways are different, and the city folks they kinder make fun of 'em, and are glad when they're gone; but I'll allow your folks ain't any sech snobs as that. I had a rippin' time with you and yer father."

"You know, I went to his club with him, and he introduced me to his friends,—purty nice fellers, too. Kinder tired lookin' most of 'em; and, when he told 'em he was a guest at my house down here last summer, and what good times he had, I pitied them fellers. They couldn't hear enough about it. They asked me more about Cape Cod than any

crowd I ever see. Wal, most of 'em sighed and said they'd gut to go with the family to Bar Harbor or Newport or somewhere. One feller says 'Hotchkiss, you're a lucky beggar. I wish my doctor would find me a Cap'n Nickerson.' "

After Aunt Cynthia went out, Sam turned to Uncle Seth and said, "Father is interested in this oyster business. He says for you not to sell; and he has spoken to his lawyer about the thing, and the lawyer says for us to get the promoter to talk all he will, and have him make promises, before witnesses, of what he will do and everything. He is going to see if they have formed the corporation, and received the charter. I'll read you what he says.

" 'About the Shellfish Company. It sounds fishy to me, and no joke intended. Mr. Morton is looking it up for me, and he says he thinks we can put a spoke in their wheel. Just tell Uncle Seth to sit tight and not sell. Get the salesman of stock to make all the rash promises of dividends, etc., that he will; but you, or some one, be near to hear the con-

versation. It isn't necessary to have false promises or misrepresentations in writing. Have a good time' (you bet, I will—this from Sam), 'and we will come down soon.' ”

“Wal, he says set tight, don't he? Sam, that's one of the best things I do,” the old man chuckled. “Oh, yes, I'm a great hand to set tight when I think it's the best thing to do. I had a little experience once down near Cape St. Roque. That's on the coast of Brazil. It was off the island of Fernando Noronha, where we put in for water one time.

“We was on the way home from the Pacific. We had intended to stop to refill our water casks at some of the West Indjy Islands, for the ship was so full of cargo that we couldn't stow enough to last the whole passage; but we fell in with the ship, *City of New Bedford*, comin' our way, and they was wuss off for water than we was, so we give 'em three casks, and 'twas agreed that both ships should stop at Fernando Noronha and fill up.

“There is no harbor at Fernando, but good

anchorage on the nor’west side of the island, formin’ a shelter from the sou’east trades, which are the prevailin’ winds. We anchored within a half a mile of the general landin’. The island was, at that time,—and probably is now,—owned by Brazil, and was a penal settlement, with a governor and a troop of soldiers to guard the convicts.

“The barracks and guard was at the general landin’, and a moderate surf broke the whole length of the beach. There was no stream where vessels could fill their casks, and no wells: the inhabitants depended on rain water, which was caught in big tanks. These tanks was located about a mile west of the anchorage, where the shore is rocky and, in consequence, the landin’ difficult. The only way to git water was to anchor the ship, unreef the raft ropes, and let the casks drift ashore separately, then have a boat’s crew ashore to receive the casks.

“Wal, we gut what water we wanted and I gut the last raft alongside shortly before sundown, and found the other two boats’ crews

was gone and only the black cook, Jordan, aboard.

“About that time there was considerbul noise on the beach, and my boat’s crew,—I was second mate then,—allowed they was goin’ ashore, for they thought their mates was in trouble with the soldiers. I wouldn’t let ’em and they gut mad and I was forced to use some solid argument with some of ’em. Wal, I finally gut my boat on the cranes, and then I found out from Jordan that the captain had gone ashore, leavin’ the fust mate in charge. He,—the fust mate,—had allowed the third mate to take a crew ashore to git a stock of liquor; and, when they’d been gone some time, he took another crew and went after ’em.

“We could hear ’em hollerin’, and once in a while a musket shot. My men left on the ship was purty sullen ’cause I wouldn’t let ’em go ashore to help out their mates. They was considerbul of a ruckus goin’ on with the soldiers, I could tell that. I watched with glasses and see the men was taking to their boats, and the soldiers follerin’ ’em up; and

it looked to me as though the soldiers was p'intin' their bayonets at 'em.

"Wal, purty soon the two boats come alongside, and their crews was all of 'em so drunk they couldn't tell what they was doin'. We gut 'em aboard after a while, but sech a wild bunch you never see. Some of 'em silly, but the most of 'em ugly and wantin' to go back and have it out with that guard. The Cap'n was goin' to spend the night ashore with some of the officers of the garrison that he knew; and here I was, with a drunken crew and two mates jest as drunk as the men. It warn't what I'd pick out for a comfortable situation.

"I warn't a favorite with the men right then, for my boat's crew told 'em how they wanted to go ashore and help 'em, but the second mate—that was me—wouldn't let 'em. I heard 'em talkin' it over, and their language warn't real ladylike when they said anything about the dunder headed fool of a second mate. The fust and third mate went sound asleep, drunk as fools, the minute they come aboard. The whole crew was a rough

lot that we'd picked up in San Francisco. They warn't fond of work, and they jest wanted to git out of the country. I shall allus think most of 'em was dodgin' the vigilantes, who was doin' their best to keep order in the gold minin' country about that time.

"Wal, I knew it would be bad for me if that drunken crowd should take it into their heads to cut up. Jordan was the only sober one that I could depend upon, and I thought likely he warn't overstocked with courage. I went over out of sight of the men and picked up a pumpbrake—a good solid club—and kept in the shadder of the mainm'st, so I wouldn't call their attention more'n I could help to the dunder headed second mate," he chuckled, "and set tight."

"I see Jordan hangin' around the outskirts of the crowd and wondered if he wanted some of the liquor; but he didn't appear to. The men was talkin' over the fracas of the afternoon and braggin' about what they did. Then one of my boat's crew spoke up. 'We wanted to come ashore, but the second mate wouldn't let us, and knocked two of the men down,'

says he, swearin' and callin' me some more names.

"'Let's go aft, and throw the cuss overboard,' says another.

"At that, they all begun to holler and yell approval, and I slid my hand down and gut a good grip on my pumpbrake. I thought mebbe they'd use me rough, and finally throw me overboard; but I had an idee they'd some of 'em know they'd been doin' sunthin', if they tried it. There was twenty-five of 'em, mebbe, and, of course, they could do fer me in the end, but I warn't goin' to run none. While they was yellin' round and talkin' it over, Jordan jumped right into the midst of 'em, and begun a song and dance, sech as negroes do sometimes; and how the men did cheer him! They clapped and wanted more. He sung and danced there for a full hour. Not all his songs were nice, but they suited his audience to a T, and, do you know, they forgot all about comin' aft and throwin' their skip-one-and-carry-two-second mate overboard. Fust thing I knew, some of 'em had dropped to sleep on the deck, and the others

had gone below, and the crisis was past. It was a narrow squeak, and no mistake. There didn't appear nothin' else to do that night, and so I done it—I jest set tight," he laughed.

CHAPTER XI

BLUFF

THAT afternoon, as Sam was coming to the shop, he heard talking, and stopped in the shed, when he recognized the voice of Hastings, the Shellfish man, as he had come to call him. Sam was no eavesdropper, but he remembered his father's injunctions and stepped into the recess made by a coal bin, where he could view the shop through a crack and hear the conversation.

"I tell you, Captain," Hastings was saying, "this is going to be the best venture any of you people in Saquoit ever went into. There's no end to the oyster grants all over the country that we can acquire. Don't you see that the few independent growers would have no chance at all? This company would control the market and the price, and you'd be sewed up. We're doing business in Delaware right

now, and it's going great. Not only paying, but paying big. I tell you, you want to get aboard."

"Mebbe you're right," said Uncle Seth, thoughtfully.

"Sure, I'm right. I have bought nearly all the grants in town but yours. We don't want to ruin the business of anybody, but you can see for yourself that we'll have to protect the interests of the company by seeing to it that the few independent owners have no market for their product."

"Mr. Hastings," began Uncle Seth, "when do you aim to start operations, and begin to git profits?"

Mr. Hastings licked his lips. He had the old boy coming. The only thing he wished was for the profits to begin. "Why, Captain, the charter of the company has been procured, manager appointed, and even now there is something going on. Have you seen our office? We have one already, and, just as soon as the oysters get of proper size, the shipments will begin. There are other men working in other places along the Cape acquiring

grants. Our market will be New York and further west. What are now your competitors will become your partners when we get to going."

"If we don't go in, you say our business will be ruined?" asked Uncle Seth, innocently.

"I'm sorry, but that seems to be the only outcome," responded the young man.

"And so, out of friendship, or sunthin' fer the rest of us poor benighted souls, you are anxious to do your best to git us in on the ground floor."

"I'd hate, honestly, to see your oyster business on the rocks, Captain. There's a good twenty per cent dividend in it for you, if you're in with us."

"You don't say!" ejaculated the Captain. "Why, that's a harnsome profit and no mistake. You mean that will be clear?"

"Absolutely," nodded Hastings confidently. "Modern business methods, price fixing, and market adjustment will do wonders."

"So it will," said Uncle Seth. "Why, I never thought there'd be that much in it. I don't think I ever gut that much in all the

years I have been in it. Who's goin' to manage the concern?"

"Mr. Simon Crooker will be our local manager," said Hastings.

"Sho, Sime Crooker?" exclaimed Uncle Seth. "Where's he picked up any knowledge of the shellfish business? Never owned a grant, did he?"

"No, Mr. Crooker has put considerable money into the concern, and, in consideration of that fact, he was made local manager."

Captain Nickerson knew Simon Crooker to be a man in Saquoit who had always lived on the income of money left him by his father, with what he could get together by deals none too honest and above board. The only work that he had ever done, so far as Uncle Seth knew, was bossing a crew of cranberry pickers on one or two occasions.

"So Sime is goin' to help you out, is he?" said the captain.

"Don't you think he will make a good man for us?" asked the promoter.

"I guess likely," said Uncle Seth, "but I

reckon I'll worry along a spell without sellin' out to ye."

"I'm sure you'll regret it, sir. I'll say, at the end of two years, you won't have an oyster business worth buying at any price. The trouble is, with some of you folks down here, you want to do things the way your grandfathers did. Good day."

"Same to you, and many uv 'em," said Uncle Seth, as Hastings left the shop.

"Hullo, Sam," said Uncle Seth, as Sam came out from the coal bin. "Did ye hear Hastings say Sime Crooker was going to be local manager of their concern? Sime Crooker! huh! No more fit to manage an oyster business than my sullen stairs are fit for a razor strop."

"What's the matter with him, Uncle Seth?" asked Sam.

"Wal, I'll tell ye. I don't say that the two last letters of Sime's surname ought to be left off; but, if I was namin' him, I should take the matter under consideration," he chuckled. "Then, jest think of Hastings tellin' me how

my oyster business was goin' to be ruined, if I didn't do as he said. Jimmynetty! When he tells me what I've got to do or take the consequences, my dander begins to rise. There's nuthin' that I despise like a game er bluff, and that feller wuz bluffin', ef I ever see anybuddy.

"Makes me think of a fellow that come down here one summer, and tried to bluff, and kinder gut me started the same way,—although this one warn't tryin' to sell nothin'. I used to have a catboat, years ago after I come home from sea, that I let to sailin' parties. Good reliable boat she was, about twenty-two foot long, the *Polly*. She done purty well for me, during the summer time; brought in a hundred or so that come in kinder handy. One day, a young chap come down to the shore, where I was diggin' a mess of clams. He was dressed right up to the nines, and had a young lady with him.

"He come along where I was, and says he, 'Cap,—I suppose you're a Cap, ain't you—could you tell me where I could hire a sail boat? I want to get one for a week, or while

I am here at the hotel. In exchange for some filthy lucre, I wish to obtain the rental of a boat with snow white sails, yo! ho!' or sunthin' like that. I warn't took much by his way of speakin', fer he looked over at the girl and winked as though he was havin' fun with the old salt.

" 'Wal, young feller,' says I, 'what you mean, without beatin' around the bush, is that you want to hire a sail boat.'

" 'Right-o! the ancient mariner speaks the truth,' and then he giggled at the girl.

" 'I've gut a sail boat out yonder,' I says, 'that I'd jest as soon take some of your filthy lucre in exchange fer, pervidin' you gut enough. It'll be two dollars per diem. By the way, do you know anything about sailin'?'

" 'Why, my dear Captain,' he says, kinder pert like, 'I invented the ocean. As fur as sail boats are concerned, I know 'em like a book.'

" 'All right, she's your'n for a week, or as long as you want her,' says I.

"The wind was blowin' fresh from the sou'west when he come down to the wharf with

his white clothes on. I had put a couple er reefs in her sail, as a precaution, fer it was a good two reef breeze.

“ ‘I’ll help ye git the sail up, if ye want,’ says I, thinkin’ I’d be decent to him, but that didn’t suit at all.

“ ‘No, thank ye,’ says he, ‘this boat is mine fer a while, and I don’t need any assistance.’

“He strutted around like a bantam rooster afore the gal, and I could see that she was took in by it all, and thought he was wonderful. Fust thing he done was to cast the *Polly* loose from the wharf, afore he gut his sail up. The wind was blowin’ in shore, so that marked him fer a green hand ter start with. I didn’t say nothin’, fer he’d been so cocky, I wanted to hear him squawk for help. Next, he gut to the leeward of the sail and begun to h’ist away. I grinned to myself, but I says nothin’. He had it comin’ to him, and purty soon he gut it good. The sail filled, and the boom come round: he was back to it. The girl ducked it, and hollered; but not quick enough, and it caught him in the rear amidship, and spanked him as he hadn’t been

spanked for some time, I reckon. It doubled him over the coamin', but he hung on, jest dodgin' a duckin'.

"Two or three old seafarin' men was on the wharf, and they begun singin' out advice to him.

" 'Yer driftin' in,' yelled Jed Plummer.

"The feller grabbed an oar, and tried pushin' her out, but workin' agin the wind he didn't make out much.

" 'Sheet's caught, aft,' hollered somebuddy. The feller run forrud.

" 'Aft, aft,' they hollered. The feller actually didn't know one end of the boat from t'other.

" 'Lift up yer center board, you can't git her off with that down.'

" 'It is up,' he yelled back, a leetle peeved.

" ' 'Tain't nuther,' contradicted Jed.

"Finally the girl gut it through her head what they meant, and hauled it up.

" 'Now, put the pin in and hold it up,' hollered Jed. He was acting as master of ceremonies, and I kept out of it.

" 'Now, shove her bow around.'

“He shoved with all his might. It is deep mud there in shore; and, as he heaved and shoved, the oar caught in the mud and he like to have went overboard,” laughed the captain. “He kept at the shovin’ until purty soon he gut her bow around so the sail filled and off she started. I heard him explainin’ to the girl that those ol moss backs gut him nervous, hollerin’, or he’d been all right.

“‘H’ist yer sail higher, ye ain’t gut it half up,’ yelled Jed, as a partin’ shot; but, either the feller didn’t hear him, or he wouldn’t pay any attention, fer over toward the island he went.

“I was waitin’ fer him to try to tack, fer his board was still up. He was goin’ to leeward all the while. Finally, he begun to bob purty nigh shore. Couldn’t seem to git her to come about, nohow. She jibed, and he went off t’other way.

“‘Cal’late he’s goin’ to jump the flats?’ asked Jed.

“‘No, but I wish I’d thought to have the island moved fer him,’ says I.

“ ‘There he goes on the flats, with the tide goin’ out,’ groaned Eph Weatherbee.

“ ‘We see him run up in the bow, and begin shovin’ with the oar.

“ ‘Tarnation fool ain’t put his centerboard down yit,’ said Jed.

“ ‘Don’t need it down on the flats,’ says I.

“ ‘No, drat it,’ says Jed, ‘but, if he’d had it down in the first place, he would have been able to tack.’

“ ‘You’ll recerllect that he invented the ocean,’ I remarked.

“ ‘Doggoned if he ain’t off!’

“ ‘He somehow had come off the flat, and there he was makin’ fer the channel into the outer harbor. I took out a pair of oars and gut into my skiff boat.

“ ‘What ye goin’ to do, Seth, row down to him?’

“ ‘I cal’late to. I don’t want the boat all racked to pieces,’ says I.

“ ‘It’ll be a long row back,’ they laughed. I didn’t intend to row back, not by a jugfull.

“ ‘The wind was dyin’ down, but I could

see him tryin' to tack back and forth across that channel. He'd git her off one shore, and then she'd go aground on t'other side. He was certainly havin' a pleasant afternoon. I wondered if he'd kept his temper 'fore the gal.

"All this time, he'd kept the centerboard up. I s'pose, as long as Jed told him to haul it up, he thought it was one of the rules of sailin' never to put it down. 'Course, it is possible to tack without the board, as you know, but you have to know how to work it.

" 'Hold on, I'll come aboard,' I yelled to him. He was perfectly willin' fer some help by this time.

" 'What's the matter with the old tub?' he hollered at me.

" 'Ain't nothin' the matter with the boat. It's the ocean,' says I. 'If you'd only invented a better ocean it would be all right.' The gal giggled, and he gut redder'n a beet.

"Wal, suh, that feller finally had to row and paddle that sail boat all the way back to the wharf. I gut it out of the channel en-

trance, and then the wind died a natural death, and left purty nigh a dead calm. He said he was tired, and suggested that I row 'em back; but I cal'lated I was ridin', myself, after pullin' the skiff out there a mile to git him out of his fix. When we gut into the wharf it was late.

" 'The hotel dining-room will be closed,' says the girl.

" 'We'll drive over to Bainrich and git dinner,' says he.

" 'No, thank you, I'll hunt up a bite somewhere,' says she, kinder offish.

" 'Too bad the breeze died down so, or you could sail her over,' says I."

Sam laughed heartily over the sailing troubles of the city chap. "No one could blame you for being angry at him, Uncle Seth."

"That was one of the times I gut good and het up, I'll admit. It was a bluff that done it. If that feller had come down and said: 'See here, Cap, I don't know the fust thing about sailin' a boat, but I'd love to learn, and I want to give the lady, here, a sail,' why, I'd

jest as soon gin him a lesson and a sail as not. But, when he come down and put up a bluff that he really knowed a lot, and then 'didn't know nothin', I was mad.

" 'Did you know that it is jest sech fools as you be that capsizes sail boats,' says I. 'You are old enough to have a leetle judgment, ef you're ever goin' to have any; but I tell ye it's criminal fer you to take a young lady out sailin', and she reskin' her life with you blunderin' round, and not knowin' aft from forrud.' I tell ye, I gin it to him good.

" 'What's the bill for the rescue, Cap'n,' he finally says, comin' down and bein' real decent. 'Jest as a pertection to this young lady, and others that ye may take it into yer fool head to invite sailin', I'll say ten dollars; but that includes a lesson termorrer in sailin' a boat. I'll give termorrer's lesson, and as many more as you'll take. By doin' it, I cal'late I'll be savin' lives.' "

"And did he come the next day?" asked Sam.

"Yep, he and the gal both; and, 'fore the summer was over, I taught 'em both to sail,

and they did real well. I tell ye, I taught that feller two things, and they were respect fer the power of the wind and not to bluff. 'As I say, a bluff makes me mad clean through.'

CHAPTER XII

THE ONE-WAY HARBOR

“**I** suppose you are going to put an auxiliary gas engine in her, aren’t you, Uncle Seth?” asked Sam, looking at the old man out of the corner of his eye.

“No, suh, I ain’t, you rascal,” grinned Uncle Seth, “and you know it. I ain’t goin’ to put no kicker in this boat. It makes me provoked whenever I see ’em clutterin’ up the harbor. Never see one that ye didn’t have to coddle and fuss with ’fore ’twould start.

“No, suh,” he continued, “I ain’t in sech a tarnation hurry that I can’t git along fast enough with the wind. I do remember one time, though, when I was glad of a leetle help besides wind power.”

“You didn’t have gas engines when you went to sea, did you, Uncle Seth?” asked the boy.

“No, it warn’t an engine that helped us out. I’ll tell ye. I was mate with Cap’n Crocker on the *Washington* out of New Bedford. It was along in February and we was cruisin’ fer sperm whales in the Pacific, jest south of the Equator: puttin’ in our time till May, when the ice would break up in the North, and we could git in to Berin’ Sea and the Ar’tic after right whales and bow heads.

“We was about abreast of Stranger Island. The wind was from the nor’rud and gittin’ brisker every minute. It looked purty thick as though sunthin’ was brewin’. The old man didn’t like the look of things a mite. In that latitude when bad weather and a storm starts, it comes down all er whoopin’, and even a whaleman likes to git under cover when he can. Stranger Island bein’ right handy, the Cap’n says to me, ‘Let’s put her in there and wait a spell.’

“I was agreeable, so we tacked ship and beat for the narrer harbor entrance on the north side of the island. Neither one of us had ever been in there, but we could see it

was purty well land-locked and we judged 'twould be a safe place.

"Wal, we beat up, as I say, then wore ship, and there we was at the entrance nice as you please, with the wind blowin' almost due north and south.

"Jest then the lookout sings out that there's whales jest astern of us. Now, when a whale-man hears that call, it's gut to be sunthin' purty desperate to keep him from goin' after 'em. The old man warn't no exception to the rule, and he was for goin' after them whales, bad weather or no bad weather.

" 'It won't come on to blow bad for four or five hours yit,' says he, and all the while it was what anybuddy else would call purty rough.

"There warn't no room in the narrer bight to come about, so we sailed inside, throwed the anchors and lowered all four boats, leavin' the cooper as ship keeper, and made for the pod of whales a good three mile off.

"Jimmynetty! when we gut outside, she was sure blowin' like thunder and Sam Hill. We gut up purty 'nigh to the whales, but they

sounded and then one of the boats crossed their glip or sunthin'—”

“What’s their glip, Uncle Seth?” Sam interrupted.

“That’s the slick they make in the water. When whales sound, and a whale boat crosses the slick, the whales allus git gallied and run. Nobuddy’s been able to tell jest why they do that, but it’s the truth, nevertheless. Wal, as I was sayin’, one of the boats crossed the glip and them critters gut gallied and we knowed there warn’t a mite of use to go after ’em, for once whales git gallied you might jest as well bid ’em good bye.

“The old man signalled all the boats to return to the ship. We stepped the masts—we had rowed out—and with our leg-o’-muttons bellied out, we run ’fore the wind right lively, I tell ye. When a whale boat is put to it she can travel some and no mistake.

“When we was a mile and a half or sech a matter from the *Washington*, we see sunthin’ that looked like boats alongside of her, and, as we gut nearer, we see that they was big war canoes full of natives. We drove them

boats for all they was wuth and swept through the mouth of the harbor with every stitch pullin'. When we made the ship, none of the natives objectin', we swarmed up over the side, ready to shake hands or fight as the case might be.

"Wal," he grinned, "we shook hands, or at least, the Cap'n did.

"The ship keeper was tryin' to have a parley with what appeared to be the head black man, but he warn't gittin' very fur, so I took a hand. I'd picked up quite a bit of talky-talk here and there among the islands. As I stood beside that giant of an islander, I thought I'd never see anything so big, unless 'twas on wheels," chuckled the old man. "There he stood, better'n 'six foot, and so broad in the beam, that if he'd wore any clothes to speak of, 'twould have took a heap er cloth to have made 'em.

"This feller's name was George—King George—and he'd come to warn us against a rival chief by the name of Kauca, from the southern half of the island, who was on the war path and at last accounts was rushin'

north to have his semi-annual go with George and his tribe.

“Accordin’ to King George, this Kauca feller was a mean cuss, meaner’n dirt, though he was a cousin of his. He’d murder his own grandmother and glad of the chance, the way I took it from George.

“This Kauca chief was especially fond of gittin’ afoul of white men. Whenever there was any about, it upset him sunthin’ turrible and he jest had to hack ’em up. He’d been known to eat his white captives, when they was served up nice and tasty, too. On the other hand, George was friendly to white men and hadn’t ever et one in his life. That was what he said, but I warn’t so all-fired sure he was tellin’ the truth about that as I wished I was. I kinder thought he might git the habit all of a sudden and it worried me.

“Stranger Island was mountainous, probably of volcanic origin. It had two narrer harbors, one on the north side, that we’d come into, and one on the south. The harbor on the north, run, as we knew, north and south, and George explained, what me and the old

man should have found out before we come in, that the no'theast trade winds blew more inward than outward: so it was an easy matter to enter, but a dog of another color to git out.

“Of course, both of us should have known that, but, never havin' been in there before, and never hearin' anybuddy say anything about it, we'd been caught nappin', and here we was in this place too narrer to tack out of, in what was almost allus a head wind. Nice kettle of fish to be in, warn't it, for two fellers that pertended to be deep-water sailors.

“The southern harbor, where this Kauca held forth, was jest the opposite, hard to git into, but easy to git out of. That is to say, easy to git out of, if 'Kauca didn't ketch ye fust. Wal, here we was. We couldn't git out and it looked as though we'd have a chance purty soon, mebbe, to fight off Kauca. He'd likely have hundreds of warriors and I judged that George would have all he could 'tend to on shore, without comin' out to help us.

“I thanked King George for warnin' us and told him that we'd do the best we could to-

wards keepin' his cousin from boardin' us, though I didn't see for the life of me how we could hold out long when he had so many men.

"Now, Cap'n Crocker was a purty shrewd old sailor and I knowed he wouldn't lay down and let them black fellers take the ship, without a tussle and he warn't foolish enough to think we'd stand a show fightin' 'em off for a great while. Purty soon, after he'd paced back and forruds two or three times, he turned to me and says, 'Mr. Nickerson,' says he—you know they allus do considerbul Misterin' on ship board—"it don't look as though we could run away, does it?"

" 'It sartin don't, Cap'n,' says I.

" 'We can't expect to fight off two or three hundred savages, either,' says he.

" 'Can't for long,' says I.

" 'Wal, then,' says he, 'it looks as though we'd gut to do sunthin' besides run or fight. Have all them boats hauled up to the ends of the davits.'

"Then he ordered all the empty casks broke out of the hold. These he had greased all

over and slung out over the sides of the vessel, level with her rail. The ropes was toggled in the bung holes so the casks made a purty smooth and slippery surface all around the ship, with nothin' to ketch holt of, if anybuddy come alongside. They couldn't throw grap-ples over the rail, ye see.

“‘Now,’ says the old man, when all was ready, ‘we’ll see what them Romeos will do about climbin’ our stairs now!’

“A better night for an attack, if they was aimin’ to make one, you never see. It was cloudy, and darker’n the inside of a whale. I didn’t much think we’d have a visit from ’em that night. In the fust place, the natives generally do their fightin’ in daylight, and in the next place, if Kauca was in the neighborhood, he’d likely run up with some of George’s men fust and we’d hear some hollerin’.

“‘Guess they ain’t comin’,’ whispered the Cap’n to me. We was all on deck, some crouchin’ and others pacin’ back and forth listenin’.

“‘No,’ says I, ‘I guess—’ and jest at that minute I heard a little swish jest abeam of

us. Some of the men had heard it and was peekin' over the side.

"I peered out through the darkness and see lots and lots of long black shapes slidin' through the water. War canoes, says I to myself. The Kaucas had slipped by King George's men all easy, for we hadn't heard a sound from shore. I suppose they had been watchin' us in the afternoon from hidin' places along the shore and seen us come to anchor. If they could seize a vessel right in George's own front yard, so to speak, it would be a great lot of feathers in their caps.

"Every man on deck crouched with pike and gun ready at hand. If ary a one of them black men was able to git his head above the row of slippery barrels, he was goin' to have a warm reception, I could see that. It was kinder creepy, jest the same, waitin' there on deck with the wind sighin' through the riggin' and the waves lappin' the sides of the ship, knowin' that but a few feet from us was a hundred or so savages sneakin' 'round ready and willin' to begin hackin' at us. I begun to think of all the stories I'd heard about vessels

bein' taken and the crews tortured, and mebbe et. Furnishin' a meal for the varmints wouldn't trouble me so much, I figgered, but it was the preparations that was goin' to bother me.

"The canoes stopped under the larb'ud quarter where I was, and the natives begun jabberin' softly among themselves, and I judged they'd found the casks hung out over the sides. They shoved around to starb'ud and grunted some more, when they found the same breastworks thrown up there. This was a new dodge, I reckon, and they didn't know jest what kind of a craft they'd run up against.

"Purty soon a dark form stood up in one of the canoes and another leaped to his shoulders and grabbed at the chimes of a cask. He was goin' to try to come over the side, whether or no. Some nervy, I called it, but from where I was, with a good oak pike pole on my hand, I sorter figgered his courage was some better'n his judgment. He must have been a strong feller, for, bracin' his feet against the side of the vessel, he hung on with

his hands and tried to kinder walk up her side. He done well, I'll say that fer him, but when he tried to git a fresh holt, it was no go, and he lost his grip and slid back onto the feller below him.

"He hadn't more'n struck the canoe 'fore he was up and tryin' it a second time. We could have opened fire on 'em then and there, but the old man thought we'd better save our ammunition, so we waited. This time the big black feller made it a leetle better and I see the top of his head edgin' up over the edge of the bar'l. I took a good grip on my club. I never did hit a man, not even a savage, without warnin', but thinks I, if he gits too fur up on that bar'l this is where I do.

"I heard him slip and that time he fell back and I guess he struck the canoe harder, for he didn't git up. If he'd broke his back, he'd saved himself a busted skull.

"The crew on the vessel was so tickled to see how well our bar'ls worked that one of 'em fetched a 'Haw! Haw! Haw!' and that set off the natives in more wild jabberin' and they begun to shoot musket balls from the

canoes; but they was so low in the water and we was so high above 'em, that the balls jest zinged through the riggin' over our heads and done us no harm.

" 'Guess we've gut clear of 'em,' says the old man, and sure enough they begun paddlin' off toward shore.

"It was gittin' lighter now and we see 'em land at the foot of a steep bank and scramble up. It was purty high and when they gut to the top, muskets begun to crack agin and bullets dropped in the water all 'round us. We kept down outer sight and none of 'em seemed to carry as fur as the vessel. They gut a better range finally, and we could hear them musket balls whine through the riggin' and go plop against the sides and barrels.

" 'Keep down,' sings out the Cap'n, 'or somebuddy'll git hurt.'

" 'I'd like mighty well to take a shot at 'em,' says one feller, peekin' up over the side and squintin' along his gun barrel. 'I could pick off some of them fellers jest as easy!'

"But the old man wouldn't hear to it.

'Wastin' bullets that we may need later,' says he.

"Musket balls begun to come thicker and then all of a sudden they stopped comin' our way but the firin' was still goin' on and then the natives begun yellin'.

" 'That's George's fellers after 'em,' yelled one man, and it looked that way to me. Another crowd was runnin' through the woods and we could see the whole fight from where we was. It was more excitin' than any movin' picture you ever see. There warn't no make believe about it nuther. They didn't fight in any solid formation, but kept poppin' at one another from behind trees and rocks. Once in a while two of 'em would git at it close in and they never quit till one of 'em dropped. King George's men gut the Kaucas on the run finally and the yells gut further away until they died out away toward the south. I cal'lated we was safe for the present anyway.

" 'Now we've gut to wait till that blamed wind changes,' says Cap'n Crocker, 'and the Lord only knows when that will be.'

“Along in the afternoon, King George and a bunch of his warriors put out from shore and come alongside. He was tickled as a baby with a new rattle. They’d driv the Kaucas south—what there was left of ’em. Kauca himself was dead; and, without their leader, George allowed it wouldn’t be any trick, at all, to go down there and clean ’em all out.

“The wind was still inshore and blowin’ purty strong and I explained to the King that we was anxious to git on our voyage and how long would this wind blowin’ right into the mouth of the harbor keep up, most likely?

“‘New moon, new wind,’ says he.

“I knowed if we waited for that, we’d be late gittin’ into the Ar’tic, and told him what a calamity it would be for us to delay.

“‘Me fix ’um,’ says he with a grin.

“How he proposed to ‘fix ’um,’ I couldn’t see, but this is how he did it. He sent thirty or forty of his men ashore where huge trees lined the bank near the entrance of the harbor. They cut one of these, leaving most of the branches as jagged ends sticking out from the main tree some eight or ten feet. They

dragged the tree to the water's edge, and, hitching a stout line to the smaller end, rolled the monstrous thing into deep water outside the mouth of the harbor. Whatever kind of wood it was, it was heavy, and sank to bottom. Many of the southern woods won't float, you know.

"They bent a line some forty fathom onto the one they'd already fastened to the smaller end of the sunken tree and came aboard with it.

"The Cap'n sensed what they was aimin' to do, and, jest as soon as they was aboard with the line, hove up the anchor. The natives double banked themselves on that rope, and standin' on the deck, they hauled away. The stubs of branches dug into the bottom out there in deep water and acted like so many anchor flukes and would hold all they could pull. With them heavin', the ship moved out, and, in this way they warped her clear of the narrer harbor that no ship could git out of unless the wind shifted to an uncommon angle.

"When the ship reached the sunken log outside, King George cut the line and hove

it aboard. In the meantime the crew had loosed the tops'ls, leaving two men at each of the bunt gaskets. As soon as the line was cut, the sails was sheeted home and h'isted all three at the same time, and within a few minutes the ship was standin' off shore in safety.

" 'George,' says the old man, 'I'm sure much obliged to ye.'

"George grinned, showing his white teeth. He didn't get much of what the old man said, but he knew it was meant to be friendly, and they shook hands all over again.

" 'Come 'gain,' says George, airin' his small store of English.

" 'Mebbe I will,' agreed the Cap'n, 'I like you fust rate and if it warn't for your southern neighbors over there, I'd drop in on ye reg-erler. I must say, though, I don't like them fellers over to the s'uthard.'

" 'Me fix 'um,' grinned the big black feller, as he went over the side and got into his canoe.

"I never went into Stranger Island again, but from what I learned from another whalin'

cap'n a few years afterwards, I judge George 'fixed 'um.' This Cap'n said that he stopped there and George had the whole island under his rule. Kauca bein' gone, all his followers, George either killed, or they became his subjects, and he was havin' a high old time.

"As for me, I didn't hanker for any more of that one way harbor."

"I should say that was a time when you were glad of something beside wind power. That was a great scheme of putting the barrels over the side. I suppose you would call that strategy, too, Uncle Seth," said Sam.

"I reckon you would, Sam. You see it don't allus pay to rush in do sunthin' rash when you can use yer head and keep out of trouble, and git what you're after," he chuckled. "Le's call it a day, Sam, and go git a mess er crabs."

CHAPTER XIII

CAP'N PETER AND CAP'N JOEL

“They pulled the Cod and Haddock in,
And fished without a rod, suh,—
And, for the fust big fish they caught,
They named the Cape, Cape Cod, suh,—
And as they had amazin’ luck,
The fishing was so handy,
They thought they’d settle on the Cape,
Although ’twas ruther sandy.”

“Yankee Doodle, keep it up,—
Yankee Doodle Dandy,—
At ketchin’ fish, or sailin’ ships,
Our Cape men are quite handy.”

THUS sang Uncle Seth, as he and Sam plied their paint brushes, giving the new sail boat her priming coat. At the conclusion of the rollicking tune, Sam dropped his brush to applaud, vigorously. “That’s

good, Uncle Seth, give us some more," he cried.

"I guess there ain't time 'fore dinner," grinned the old man. "If I recerllect right, there's some forty-two verses, in all. Don't take too much paint on yer brush, to once, Sam," he cautioned. "The fust coat wants to be thin and brushed out well. Don't ever want the primin' coat daubed on thick, or she'll blister. That's it, now you're gettin' the idee."

"I like to paint, don't you, Uncle Seth?" asked Sam, smoothing the white surface of the boat's hull, carefully.

"Yes, I ruther enjoy it," agreed the old man, "except where it means climbin' a ladder. You know, its funny, I never used to mind gittin' up high,—jest as soon go up on the yards of a vessel as not. Calm or storm, it made no difference to me. She might roll and pitch all she wanted to and I was jest as much to home as I would be in the settin' room rocker. I've reefed in a blow when the canvas was roarin' and slattin' all around me and it seemed as if the craft was goin' to hop up in the air and come down topm'st fust; and

I thought nothin' of it. But I've been ashore quite a spell and I s'pose I've gut used to huggin' the ground purty close, for, now if I git up more'n ten foot, I feel as though I was as high as Provincetown monument."

"I should think when a young sailor went aloft for the first time, he'd be scared. I'm sure I should be," said Sam.

"You'd be all right, if you went at it kinder gradual. If you happened to have a mate that ordered you aloft for the fust time in a blow, you'd have a hard time, most likely," said the old sailor.

"You mean that they sometimes used to ask a man to climb the rigging in a storm, before he'd had any practice?" asked Sam, in amazement.

"There was plenty of mates that would do jest that," declared Uncle Seth, "though it might mean death for the young feller."

"I should have refused to go," said the boy, emphatically. "Just tell the mate I'd rather try it on a calm day first."

"You'd have,—Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho! Yes, yes, you'd have looked purty tellin' a regerler

hard b'iled mate of a wind jammer that," laughed the old sailor. "The next thing you'd know, most likely, would be when they throwed a bucket of sea water over ye to bring ye to,—if they took that much trouble. Sam, in the old days, young fellers didn't tell the boss what they would do and what they wouldn't. They done what they was told and done it quick. It warn't real healthy for 'em to do different.

"They was a good deal like Hezekiah Simmons over to Craig's Mills. Hez was a bachelor and lived with his sister Myra. A small meek kind of a feller was Hez, hardly dared say his soul was his own, as fur as Myra was concerned. She was a big up-standin' woman and would have made two of her brother. He needed jest sech a partner to look after him, but it was purty gallin' for him to have her boss him 'round so, 'specially when there was others present.

"One day Myra said it was time to move the settin' room stove out into the shed for the summer. Hez allowed it was all foolishness to git that great heavy stove back and forth

every season. Said they ought to let it stay in the house. Myra jest looked at him, and he mumbled a little and went over across the street and gut Jimmy Bates to help him. Myra warn't no where around when he gut back with Jimmy. They tackled the stove and after quite a tussle gut it out into the shed.

“ ‘That was a lift, and no mistake, Hez,’ says Jimmy. ‘I should think you’d leave the tarnation thing in the house all summer.’

“ ‘I ain’t goin’ to move it agin’, declared Hez. ‘Back it goes into the settin’ room this fall, and I say, there it stays. I’m goin’ to stop sashayin’ that stove around.’ Jest then, he looked up and there stood Myra in the doorway. She fixed her eye on him and he curled up like a leaf in the sun.

“ ‘There, there, Hezie,’ says Myra, ‘Don’t you be tellin’ what you’re goin’ to do. You don’t know what you’re goin’ to do.’ And she turned and walked away.

“So it was on ship board. You didn’t go around tellin’ what you was goin’ to do. You was there, and there you stuck, and you done

what you was told, no matter how disagreeable."

"Just about the same as being in jail," said Sam.

"Sometimes it did seem that way," agreed Uncle Seth. "A sailor did have the chance to desert when he struck port, but that was often jest what the officers wanted him to do, for then they wouldn't have to pay the wages due him. If he shipped on another vessel, often times he wouldn't be any better off. Yes, a ship with hard officers was a good deal wuss than bein' in jail, especially if the jail was like Bainrich jail when Zeb Gurney was jailer.

"There was some sort of a reformer or other that was goin' round investigatin' the county prisoners,—goin' to write a piece about 'em for some society. In his round of visits he struck Bainrich and since that was one of the oldest of the country lock ups, he went in to interview Zeb and look the place over.

"Zeb was polite to him and took him around, answerin' his questions as best he could. He fired questions at Zeb fast, and

acted as though he was tryin' to find out sunthin' that warn't jest right about how Zeb was carryin' on his job as jailer. Finally he says, 'Where are your prisoners?'

"Zeb p'inted out in the yard where two old derelicts sot on the fence, whittlin' in the sun. 'There they be,' says Zeb.

" 'You allow yer prisoners considerbul liberty,' he sputtered. 'That all ye gut, two?' "

"Zeb had stood about all the investigatin' he could and he says solemn as could be, 'Wal, I did have another one but he gut dissatisfied with the cookin' and left, about a month ago.' "

"That must have startled the investigator some," laughed Sam.

"I reckon it did," chuckled Uncle Seth, "it give him sunthin'—Jimmynetty! What's that?" exclaimed the old captain, as with a bang and a clatter, an automobile came to a halt in the side yard.

"By time! it's Cap'n Peter Sprague and Cap'n Joel Handy. I never knew they had a car," said Uncle Seth, as he rushed from the shop with Sam following.

"Hello, Sethie," called both men.

"Ahoy! old shellbacks," cried 'Captain Nickerson, heartily. "Clew up yer sails and come aboard for a gam," he invited.

"That's what we come for," said Captain Joel, the smaller of the two. "Gut both anchors out, Petey?"

His companion dragged a coil of rope from under the seat and proceeded gravely to moor the car to the Sweet Bough tree from the rear axle and to Aunt Cynthia's clothes post from the front. "Thar," he said, as he looked at the automobile, speculatively, "Guess I've gin her plenty of warp, so she won't drag none."

Sam gazed with wondering eyes at the strange method of making fast an automobile and although nearly convulsed, managed to shake hands with the two captains with a straight face.

"Come right into the shop," said Captain Nickerson, "I ain't seen you fellers sence Nero was a pup. How ye ben?"

"We're fust class, now we've gut one of these gasolene craft," said Joel. "We was stayin' to home too much, kinder gittin' bar-

nacles and needed pullin' up into dry dock. I said to Peter, 'We're too young to be abandoned on the beach, yit awhile. What we need is some short cruises and see some new water.' He agreed that we oughter have more fun as we went along, that mebbe, we wouldn't live more'n thirty or forty year more," he cackled, "though I told him that was nonsense, I was jest as spry at seventy-five as I ever was—"

"I told Joel," interrupted Captain Peter, "That there warn't no use in hivin' up to home all the time, and I proposed we buy an automobile. Have as much fun as ye can, as ye go along,—that's me; for, as Ben Peters says, there's jest this life and one other and then the jig's up."

"What ye gut the pike stickin' out on the stern of yer machine for?" asked Uncle Seth, curiously.

"Come inside and I'll tell ye about that," said Captain Peter. "It's one of my inventions and when the big automobile makers see it, I cal'late they'll put 'em on all the cars."

Soon the three old captains of other days

were seated, with their pipes going nicely. Sam sat on the bench expectantly, for he knew of old, when Uncle Seth and some of his old cronies got together, it was bound to be interesting.

"I'm sartin surprised," began Captain Nickerson, "that you boys should buy a craft without sails. I'm kinder ashamed of ye, squanderin' your money like that. You oughter put by a leetle sunthin' for your old age," he chuckled, for both the old seafaring bachelors, who lived together down the Cape, were notoriously "well fixed."

"They be expensive," admitted Captain Joel, "especially with Petey drivin'. I don't know how many hens and dogs he's had to settle for, fust and last."

"How about that cow you put on her beam ends?" demanded the other captain, his eyes snapping beneath his bristling eyebrows.

"I never run into that cow, at all," protested his companion. "She run into me. You see, Sethie, it was this way about that cow. She was a blamed fool critter anyway. I was blowin' the fog horn all the time and sig-

nalled that I was goin' to pass her to starb'ud. She crossed my course 'thout payin' any attention to red or green. Then I tacked and she done likewise. Every time I wore ship, she seemed to be of the same mind. Had more minds about which way she was goin' than any female I ever see. Finally, when we was hardly a ship's long boat apart, she bunted right into my bows. So it warn't my fault at all."

"Cost ye seventy dollars, jest the same, didn't it?" taunted Captain Peter. "I tell ye, Seth, I knew jest as soon as I looked at that cow, after he'd hit her that, as a cow, she wouldn't ever amount to a thing, agin. Struck her on the port side about amidships and I cal'late, stove her timbers; anyway, we thought she warn't wuth salvagin', so we put her out of her misery and hunted up the owner. She was damaged below decks, somewheres—"

"Mebbe you strained her milk," chuckled Uncle Seth.

"Strained her—Ho! Ho! Ha! He! He!

Did you hear that Joel? He says—He! He! Ha! Ha! Ha! Seth, you do beat all.”

“How about your machine?” inquired Uncle Seth. “Did it stave her up any?”

“Not to speak of,” replied Captain Joel. “Battered her bow some, but she didn’t leak a drop and we made port without payin tow-age.”

“How about that drogue, or whatever you call it, stickin’ out astern of yer auto,” asked Captain Nickerson, who knew there was a good reason for the pointed pole that hung from the rear axle, with the peaked end resting on the ground, where it dragged in the dust of the roadway as the car proceeded.

“I’ll tell ye,” began Joel. “That’s Peter’s idee. Yer see, when Peter fust learnt to drive, he was skittish. Peter’s old, Peter is—”

“I ain’t but four days older’n you be,—” broke in Peter.

“Now, boys, boys,” remonstrated Captain Nickerson, “don’t start quarrelin’. Everybuddy knows that you’re spryer than colts,

the both of ye. Go ahead with your story, Joel."

"Yes, Joel," snapped Peter, "most of it is a darned lie, but go ahead with it."

Undisturbed by his brother captain's caustic remark, Captain Joel continued. "As I say, Peter was skittish. He gut on to steerin' her purty quick,—she minds her helm fust rate and steers jest like a schooner, but this shiftin' speeds was what bothered him. Fust off every time Peter tried to shift gears, as they call it, there was the darndest gratin' and poundin' down in her lower hold you ever heard. Sounded as though she was bumpin' right along on bottom and was goin' to tear her keelson out, any minute. The feller that learnt us showed him what the trouble was, so that passed off, but sometimes when he tried it half way up a hill, she'd jest stand still for a minute with her sails all aflutter. We was afraid that sometime she'd start driftin' astern and mebbe bump into some shoal water.

"One day we started out, with Pete drivin'; and I've gut to admit that Peter handled her like a man with fust officer's papers. He

tacked and sailed 'fore the wind,—didn't seem to make no difference to him. When we gut along to Jabez Holland's old place, there's a turn jest 'fore you start to go up the hill, if you recerllect. Wal, he had to take in a leetle sail goin' 'round the curve, and when he struck the risin' ground he tried to shift gears and her pumps stopped workin' and she broached, driftin' off her course down over the edge of the road towards Jabez's parstur.

"Wal, 'twas lafferbul," cackled the old man. "I thought to myself, what a joke it will be on Peter, if we pile up agin a stone wall or sunthin'. Peter, he began to holler and work all the dinguses in sight, and still she kept draggin'. Peter kinder fergut himself, you know, he's allus talkin' about this 'ere automobile as though she was a boat. 'Throw out t'other anchor,' he yelled to me. Nuther one of us thought of the brakes, all we thought of was keepin' her clear of the rocks, for the channel runs purty narrer down in Jabez's parstur lane. Pete kept her stern fust down the lane, and managed to keep clear of green water till we come to the gate. When

he see we was goin' to strike, Peter yelled, 'Take to the life boats. Women and children fust,' " laughed the diminutive Captain Joel.

"Bang! There was a splinterin' of wood and the thing stopped. We'd shattered the gate but our craft was stopped. After that scrape, Peter gut the idee of this drag, out behind. Yer see, with this pike hung down to the ground at an angle from the ex, the minute she begins to start astern, the sharp pike takes holt and there she stops."

"Fust rate idee," declared Uncle Seth. "Do you allus tie her up when you leave her, as you did here?"

"Most allus," said Captain Peter. "Yer see, Sethie, we've been used to lines so long that we've gut considerbul confidence in good hemp rope,—more'n we have in the stoppin' in'ards of this 'ere automobile."

"What you doin', buildin' a boat, Seth?" asked Joel.

"What did you think he's doin', cuttin' a dress pattern?" asked Captain Peter sarcastically, nudging Uncle Seth in the ribs with his elbow.

"Sethie, as Peter grows older, it beats all how smart he gits," said Captain Joel, casting a sad glance at the chuckling Peter.

"Allus was smart," grinned Uncle Seth. "Yes, Joel, I'm tryin' to build a boat. S'pose I'll git her tight?"

"If you can't git her tight no other way, you can do the same as Cap'n Elphalet Sturgis told the feller one time," suggested Peter. "This feller had lots of trouble with his boat leakin'. One would tell him that she must leak along her garb'ud and another said he believed it was her centerboard box. He caulked here, and he caulked there, but she'd fill up in twenty four hours the best he could do.

"One day Cap'n Elphalet come along where the feller was workin' on her and he appealed to the Cap'n to know what he should do to stop her leakin'.

"The Cap'n stuck his knife blade into her hull, clear up to the handle,—she was soft and punky clear through. 'Wal,' says Cap'n Elphalet, 'ef she was mine, I'd shingle her.' "

"I may have to do that," laughed Captain Nickerson.

Stories and jokes flew thick and fast for an hour or more when Captain Peter pulling a huge silver watch from his pocket exclaimed, "Joel, did you know it's nigh onto eleven o'clock? Time to be goin'. No, thank ye, Sethie, can't stop to dinner today. We'll be up again. Now we've got this gasolene contraption, we'll see ye real often."

"Now, Peter," said Joel, once they were in the yard, "lemme git to the wheel. Heave short and h'ist yer jib.—Good bye! Here's hopin' we don't git becalmed." And the "gasolene craft," filled away on her course.

CHAPTER XIV

A PAIR OF CROOKS

SAM and Uncle Seth were coming from the post office when they met Eben Bates the stage driver.

"Mornin', Cap'n Seth," called Eben.

"Mornin', Eb," answered the Captain. "Fair wind with ye this mornin'?"

"Yep," said Eben, "fair wind and nary a cloud in the sky. Look here, how's this look to ye?" he asked, pulling some bank notes from his pocket.

"Looks good, Eb," grinned the Captain. "Been openin' the mail bags?"

"I ain't at liberty, yit, to tell ye jest where I gut it, but my advice is to buy some Eastern Shellfish stock and mebbe you'll have sunthin' like it yourself. There, I ain't told ye nothin', have I?" he chuckled. "Never had to turn my hand over to git this."

"Reckon you had to turn the money you gut from that parstur lot over, though, Eben," said Uncle Seth, with a shake of his head.

"The folks I deal with don't bother with no checks nor nothin'. Jest hand over the cold hard cash. I know some others that have had money comin' to 'em jest like this and they're tellin' some of their friends, so I'll pass the word along to you. I ain't told ye where I got it, though, have I?" he said, mysteriously, as he walked off.

"What do you make out of that?" asked Sam, as they continued down the street. "Do you suppose the Shellfish Company amounts to something, after all?"

"No, I don't, Sam," said Uncle Seth. "This passin' out dividends in cash would tell me that, if I had any doubt about it before. This money is jest a bait so folks will hear about it and Hastings can sell some more stock. He's cute enough not to pay by check so that if anything comes up he could swear that he hadn't ever paid 'em a cent. I heard the other day that a feller tried to buy some more stock and Hastings wouldn't let him

have it for less than a hundred and twenty dollars a share. I tell ye, they're workin' this thing for all its wuth.

"Mebbe, these fellers will git rich quick, like they think, but I'm thinkin' they'll be cryin' baby in ten months. They won't git my oyster grant unless they give me a good price for it in cash, and then, I don't know as I'd sell, for I like to see such things owned by our home folks. Oysters and cranberries are two things that keep Cape Cod goin' and give a good many of our folks a livin' and there ain't no reason why outsiders need to come down here and take the bread and butter from our folks."

"Of course, I don't know much about such things," said Sam, "but that Hastings is too slick looking to make me have much confidence in him."

"Me, too, Sam," agreed the old man.

"There ain't no lawyer here at Saquoit that could do anything about it. Squire Bedly is hand and glove with them promoters and I reckon they've give him quite a bit of business and I hear they've retained him as their

local attorney. So he's sewed up, so to speak."

"Father's attorney, Mr. Morton, isn't sewed up," declared Sam, "and he's just the kind of man who would go to any end to protect the local people in a scheme of this kind, for nothing."

"Must be a curious kind of a lawyer," said Uncle Seth, with a dubious shake of his head.

"Oh! he's a great chap. Father thinks the world of him, and he says he's absolutely honest. Has so much money himself that he doesn't need to work, but keeps on for the love of the game."

"Well, I'm glad your father has got him to take holt of it. I hope he'll do sunthin' purty quick, 'fore Hastings skips out with all the money. I won't lose nothin' out of it, if the whole thing goes to smash, but I feel as though I ought to protect my neighbors from their own greediness. Some folks, you know, that would haggle and dicker about the price of eggs, will let some slick feller come along and fool 'em good with any scheme like this. He can talk 'em into anything by big promises. They ain't satisfied to let a

'dollar go out and earn a reasonable livin', like four or five cents a year. They want to work it to death and bring in twenty cents. I figger you can overwork a dollar jest as much as you can a man."

"I saw Hastings talking to John Waterbury the other day. Do you think he could get him into it?"

"By thunder and guns! if he does and the thing falls through, Hastings ought to be rid out of town on a rail. John has got a little money, mebbe three or four thousand, that he and his wife Tabithy has saved and now she's crippled up with rheumatiz and can't hardly git around. John works for some of the summer folks by the day, and goes oyster-in' in the winter and they git along purty well, but if he should lose that three thousand, the courage would be clean took out of him. I'm goin' over to see John right after dinner and see if that Hastings has got his hands on that money. If he has, I can't do nothin', but if he ain't, I think I can persuade John to let the stuff alone. He'll listen to me, unless the promoter has got him hypnotized, same as he

has a lot of 'em. Oh why can't these city fellers let us alone down here!" he sighed mournfully.

"Tom says there is another promoter selling stock over in Masonville in this thing, too,—man by the name of Brander. He's got some of the oyster men there to sell their grants and take stock in payment."

"Oh, I suppose they'll milk us all dry if they can. Dum 'em!" said the old man wrathfully.

At this same time Hastings and his partner Brander were closeted in Hastings' bedroom at the Wescusset House.

"Look here, Jim," said Hastings to Brander, a short puffy man of forty-five, "you ain't workin' that Masonville crowd as you should. Make 'em come across with some dough. If you just get the grants and pay 'em in stock, where does that get us, I ask you? Nowhere. Get 'em to buyin' more stock for cash money. Why, I've got 'em feedin' out of my hand over here. The easiest bunch of hicks I ever run up against. There's only two that I can't land and I know that they've both got a bunch

of kale. This old man Nickerson is one. If I could land his grant, I'd have a lot more folks buying. He seems to be the bell cow in this neck of the woods and he's the one I want to land and then I'll clean up quick."

"They're a wise bunch over in Masonville," complained Brander.

"Wise, nothing! Think how we went into little old New York and cleaned up on that—"

"Oh, yes, I know," Brander interrupted. "And think how we've had to keep under cover for two years before we dared start anything. I haven't dared go to New York since. There was money in it for us, but I would like one more sight of Broadway."

"Cold feet, eh," sneered Hastings.

"No, I ain't got cold feet, but I don't hanker about spendin' a vacation on the Island."

"Not a chance of it, old man. Buck up. I've been in the game from sellin' admission tickets to Central Park, when I needed the money, to floatin' a proposition like this that'll clean us up an easy fifty thousand bucks apiece,

and I've never done time yet. I tell you they haven't a thing on us here. We haven't put a thing on paper, remember that. Not a statement on paper that they can pin on us. What we've said to 'em, we've said alone. Delaware is a good way from here. There ain't a guy in town that is sharp enough to look into it. Those dividends in good hard money we gave out, have got 'em all clamoring for more stock and I'm going out and mark it up another ten points. This is a good way from the red lights and the big noise. It isn't as though there was a federal agent looking around every corner."

"I tell you, they don't seem to want to put any money into it in Masonville," protested Brander. "I've bought all the grants I could, but I've always had to give 'em part cash and nobody wants to buy any more. I guess you've got to come over there and see what you can do."

"What's the matter with you?" demanded Hastings. "This is the town I was supposed to work, and you, Masonville. That's your

job. I'm doing my work here, all right. Why should I come and do part of yours and then split fifty fifty? Tell me that." His eyes glittered and he looked an altogether different person than the smooth, suave, smiling gentleman who talked with Uncle Seth a few days before.

"Now, don't git sore, Bill. I'll agree that you're a smother guy than I am. We're in this thing together and if I can't pull off what you think I ought to on my end, why, it's no more than fair for you to jump in for a few day and help me out."

"Yes, I'll do it, but we'll split two and one. I get two thirds and you one third. What do you say?"

"I say, nothing doing," drawled Brander and he looked knowingly at the other.

"You don't mean you'd squeal?" demanded Hastings, threateningly.

"Nothing but," responded his companion, coolly. "Nobody has got anything on me. I could say I was working for you and thought it was all above board. With you it's dif-

ferent. They are still looking for you for the—”

“Never mind going into details. You’d be a squealer. Throw down a pal. That’s the kind—”

“Never mind that stuff. Look here, Bill. You talk about squealing and throwing down a pal. How about you telling me about selling stock to this one and that one for a hundred and five and a hundred and ten, when I know that you sold fifty shares this morning at one hundred and thirty. How about that, hey? Squealing, bosh! Now, I’m onto you, Bill Hastings, and hereafter you come clean to me, you hear, or—” and he tapped his hip pocket significantly.

Smiling again, Hastings patted the fleshy one upon the shoulder. “Now, Jim, let’s not quarrel. It won’t pay to have any hard feelings.”

“It won’t pay you to try throwin’ any bull to me,” Brander growled.

“I’ll go to Masonville tomorrow or next day,” promised Hastings, “and show you how to get blood out of these turnips. How’s that?”

I never meant to hold out any of the dough on you, Jim. I was saving it as a little extra bunch of money for you. Come on. Let's get at 'em."

CHAPTER XV

A STRANGER AT SAQUOIT

SAM walked about the depot platform impatiently. The train from Boston, which was to bring his father and mother to Saquoit, must be late. He looked at his watch for the twentieth time. Three minutes to train time. It seemed as though he had waited two hours already, but he knew that it had been hardly fifteen minutes. As he stood there with the soft, fresh breeze blowing upon his bronzed cheeks and ruffling his uncovered hair, he realized just how much he had missed his father and mother. He had been so busy, and his days had been so full of fun and excitement, that he had scarcely had time for being lonesome, but now that they were coming the minutes dragged wearily. There were so many things to tell them; so many things to show them. Why didn't that train come?

"Thar she comes," cried the baggage master, wheeling a truck out upon the platform.

As the train loudly ground to a stop, Sam danced and hopped about, trying to look over the heads of the alighting passengers, to catch a glimpse of the familiar faces.

There they were. Sam rushed forward and flung his arms about them both.

"My, how brown you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Hotchkiss.

"Isn't he the Indian, though?" laughed Mr. Hotchkiss, giving the boy a slap on the back.

Sam grabbed their bags and while Mr. Hotchkiss attended to their trunks, he led his mother to the waiting stage.

"Well, son," said Mr. Hotchkiss, as they were settled in the back seat and started on their ride, "how is everything? Been having a good time?"

"You bet," said Sam. "Did you bring my camera? Want to go sailing this afternoon? Shall we go fishing tomorrow? Uncle Seth is building a new boat and I am helping. What does Mr. Morton say about—" A

warning glance from his father toward the driver and another passenger in the front seat cut short his last question. Sam had been going to ask about the shellfish company and what Mr. Morton, the lawyer, said about it.

"Well, Sam," laughed his father, "you ask so many questions all at once, I guess I'll say yes to all of them and let it go at that. I'm down here for a good time, sailing, fishing, clamming, crabbing, tramping and anything, so, whatever you're doing, I'm in on it."

"I want you to meet Tom," said Sam. "He and I have had some great times together."

"Tom?" asked his mother. "Who is Tom?"

"He's a fellow that I've got acquainted with. He goes to college and has a little farm where he raises vegetables and berries. He's a great chap. He's working his way through college and has one more year. He's young, too, only three or four years older than I. We've had some great times."

"Is he the boy who took you to the woods fire?" asked Mrs. Hotchkiss, anxiously. "I don't like to have you around fire."

"Sam can take care of himself, Mother, he's a big boy," his father said, proudly. He had heard, through Uncle Seth, about Sam's rescue of Tom from the burning woods but he had kept the news from his wife, for he knew that like all mothers, she would worry, if she knew. Sam had not mentioned that part of his experience at the fire in his letters, and that pleased his father, too.

When the driver of the stage,—not Eben Bates this time,—had gone into the post office at Craig's Mills with the bags of mail, there was a lull in the conversation and the passenger on the front seat turned and spoke. "I beg your pardon for interrupting your family reunion," he said pleasantly, "but I take it you are acquainted with Saquoit. I wonder if you would tell me the best place to stop for a week or two?"

"The only hotel in this town is the Wes-cusset House," replied Mr. Hotchkiss.

"I would rather stop with a family, if I could. I'm not fussy about style. All I want is rest and quiet, plain food and a good place to sleep," he said.

As he was finishing his statement, the driver came out and climbed in. "D'you say you was lookin' for a place to board?" he asked. "Wal, I'll tell you of a place that mebbe you could git in, and that is Stearnses. Mis' Stearns might take ye."

"You mean Tom Stearns' mother?" asked Sam.

"Yep, we'll stop there on our way into the village. It won't do no harm to ask her."

Sam liked the keen faced stranger on sight. He felt a desire to help him have a good time on Cape Cod. He, himself, had enjoyed it all so much that he wished every one else to.

"I have a letter of reference from a friend of mine in Boston," said the stranger, handing a letter to Mr. Hotchkiss.

Sam's father only looked at the signature and exclaimed, "From Morton, eh? I know him very well. He's my lawyer. I would be glad to help out any friend of his."

"I know Mrs. Stearns, Father," said Sam. "I think she'd do me a favor."

"Go ahead, son," said his father.

"My name is Hatherway, as you will see by the letter," said the stranger, "and I thank you, my boy. It's very kind of you. I'm fed up on hotels."

Sam had no difficulty in persuading Mrs. Stearns to take an occupant for her spare room and the stage drove down the village street, leaving Mr. Hatherway at the Stearn's cottage.

"Nice, bright looking chap," commented Mr. Hotchkiss. "Seems as though I had seen him before. Face looks mighty familiar."

Sam allowed his father only time to hustle into some other clothes before he took him in hand. First of all, they visited the shop, where the new catboat was all ready for the glistening spars and rigging: then for the shore and the *Cynthia B.*

"Now, tell me all that you know about the shellfish company," demanded Sam. "It's a mean shame to have Uncle Seth so worried. If he was like some men, he'd let the other people go ahead and sell their oyster grants and be taken in, but he wants to keep the Saquoit people from getting stuck, if he can."

"I'm not surprised, knowing Uncle Seth, that he should feel that way," said Mr. Hotchkiss. "I'm satisfied that he's right. The thing is a fake. Mr. Morton has laid the matter before the district attorney and they will act just as soon as they have sufficient evidence."

"Hurray!" shouted Sam. "I knew it was the thing to do, to tell you about it. Uncle Seth thought you wouldn't like to be bothered but I wasn't afraid of bothering you," laughed Sam.

"That's right, Son," said his father. "You needn't ever be afraid of bothering me, if it's to help fight any business that's crooked. Morton will take care of it."

CHAPTER XVI

SAM LETS HER JIBE

THE next morning, Tom brought his mother's new boarder down to show him the town, and Mr. Hatherway took the opportunity to stop in at Uncle Seth's, and thank Sam and his father, once more, for getting him what he declared was a delightful place to board.

"Mis' Stearns will look after ye well," said Uncle Seth. "If you can stand Tom, here," he grinned, giving Tom a dig in the ribs, "you'll be right comfortable."

Presently, the conversation veered to the shellfish company; and, before Uncle Seth knew it, he was telling the stranger all about it. "There," said the Captain at last, "I guess I've give you enough of that. You didn't come to Cape Cod to hear all about our troubles. Sam, you and Tom better take

Mr. Hatherway out sailin'. Your father and I will jest putter 'round this forenoon, and talk things over."

Hatherway proved to be a good sailor, and seemed to enjoy his morning on the water to the fullest. The *Cynthia B.* "behaved purty," as Uncle Seth would say, and the boys showed their guest all the delightful spots about the beautiful little harbor. He was interested in all they had to tell him of the village people, and asked all manner of questions. He laughed heartily over Captain Joel and Captain Peter and declared that Saquoit must be just the best place to spend a summer.

The boys talked of Hastings and his shell-fish combine, of Uncle Seth's opinion that it was a fake. To all this Mr. Hatherway listened but ventured no opinion. Altogether, it was a very pleasant morning, and Mr. Hatherway assented eagerly to more sailing trips.

That afternoon, Sam, having had a morning on the water, decided to make it a day and spend the afternoon on the harbor. Since

Uncle Seth and his father were busy, Sam set out for his sail alone. There was a glorious breeze and as it struck the *Cynthia B.* on her quarter, dashing the salt spray into the boy's face, he laughed with delight at the feel of the cold mist. It was a one reef day, but Sam had reached the stage in his sailing experience, where he looked with disdain upon reefing. It was well enough for beginners and girls to reef and carry a tender in tow, he declared, but after one knew about sailing, that was different.

The *Cynthia B.* was ramping along in the outer harbor now; and, as Sam tacked skillfully, and the little boat filled away again on her course, the water hissed and swirled in her wake. The stays, tight as bow strings, sang with the vibration set up by the wind; and Sam sang in his heart, as the catboat sped along, with lee rail under, into the rolling Vineyard Sound.

He thought with a thrill of the return trip, before the wind. He loved to sail before the wind. With the sail wide spread, the boat

seemed to hardly touch the water, but skimmed over its surface like a bird on the wing.

Sam looked at his watch. "Gosh!" he muttered, "guess I'll turn back or I'll be late for supper." He came about and headed his craft for the harbor. How she did race! Sam grinned as he thought how Uncle Seth would probably say that "she jest picked up her skirts and dusted." The *Cynthia B.* scuttled along over the dancing, white crested waves with a fine bone in her teeth.

Reef? huh! who would reef with such a glorious breeze as this? The young skipper changed his course a bit to make the inner harbor; and, as he did so, quick as a flash, the long boom swung. Sam ducked, and put her hard over, but not quickly enough. The main sheet ran out with a whirr. Snap! went the mast. Suddenly, Sam found himself in the water, in the midst of ropes, spars and flapping sail. What a mess! He thought not a bit of his own safety, but of the poor *Cynthia B.* with her heavy ballast. "She'll sink sure,

and Uncle Seth will be broken hearted," thought Sam.

The catboat was floundering about on her side, but she did not sink. Then, Sam thought of the water tight compartments under the seats. These were keeping her up. Uncle Seth had put them in for just such an emergency. If he could only get her to shore! He swam toward her bow, and, grabbing the painter, struck out; but, as much as he kicked and hauled, the catboat on her side with the mast trailing, and her sails water soaked, would hardly budge.

He didn't feel so cocky now about jibing. Uncle Seth had told him to come about when he was running before the wind, if he wished to change his course; and now he had behaved like any landlubber, and let her jibe hard. Captain Nickerson could have jibed in safety because he knew "jest when to let her go, and ease her up," but that was something that Sam hadn't become proficient in. If he had had two reefs in, or even one the thing would not have happened; but reef? oh no! only girls

reefed. He arraigned himself severely, while he was pulling frantically at the painter.

"Now what would Uncle Seth do, if he was in this scrape," thought the youthful skipper of the *Cynthia B.* "Why, he'd probably climb on the unsubmerged side, and wait for some one to come along." It was getting dark, and the shadows were lengthening along the shore a half mile distant. He couldn't see a solitary boat or person.

"Ah! here comes a boat." He could hear the put-put-put of the engine, and just then a long dark figure of a motor boat shot into the area of his vision.

He didn't want to cry out. That was too much of a fuss to make about just getting dumped overboard; and, besides, his cries couldn't be heard above the noisy engine of the motor boat. He waved his arms, as he clung to the hull of the cat boat, and the motor boat swung over and made for him.

It was Bill Hastings, who was just returning from Masonville, where he had been to give his partner a lift at "trimmin' the hicks."

"Ahoy! and all that sort of thing," he yelled, with a grin at Sam on the overturned boat.

"Ahoy," answered Sam. "Give me a tow in, will you?"

Hastings had stopped his engine, and was drifting up to the poor *Cynthia B.* "Surest thing you know," and he smiled. "Aren't you the kid I've seen around with Cap'n Nicker-son? Thought so," he smiled.

Sam slid off the hull, and swam to the bow, where he laid hold of the painter and handed it to Hastings. "Wait till I gather up some of these things," he said, and swam after the floating oar and seats. As fast as he salvaged the articles, he threw them aboard the motor boat, and then he clambered in himself, water running from his clothing in rivulets.

"You took a lot of trouble to get all those oars and things. I should let 'em go. They'll float ashore anyway," the promoter commented, as he turned his engine over and she responded with a sputter.

The motor boat made rather slow progress

towing the heavy catboat upon her side in the water; but it was only a short way, and Sam was glad of it, for he didn't wish to be under obligation to this man Hastings.

"Cold?" inquired Hastings, as they pulled up near the wharf.

"No," answered Sam, shortly.

"Sore that you tipped over, aren't you?" said Hastings with a grin. "'Fraid the old man'll give it to you good for breaking his boat up?"

Sam was sore; but he wasn't so afraid of what Uncle Seth would say, as he was sorry to be the cause of damage to the dear *Cynthia* B. "No, I'm not afraid of what he'll say," answered Sam a little more pleasantly. "No need to be a bear, even if I don't like the fellow," he thought.

"Just hired this craft in Masonville," said Hastings. "Think I'll buy her. She goes like a bird. Some old tub, I'll say. How do you like it at the Cap'ns?" he added.

"Oh, I like it fine," said Sam, who could always be enthusiastic when it came to talking about Uncle Seth's.

"Nice old guy, the Cap'n," finally said Hastings.

Sam resented having Uncle Seth called an old guy, but he did not show his resentment, merely said, "Yes, he's a fine old chap."

"Likes you, I could see that," said Hastings.

To this Sam made no answer. "Yes," went on the promoter, "nice old party, the Cap'n, but narrow, very narrow. Won't make money if he can help it. Suppose he has enough, likely," looking to Sam for confirmation.

Sam said nothing to this either but moved aft to seize the *Cynthia's* painter. He proposed to tie her to the wharf, just as she was, till morning.

"Say," said Hastings as they neared the landing, "you're from the city, aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm from Boston."

"Knew it," exclaimed Hastings triumphantly. "Knew you didn't belong to the crowd around here. They are a nice bunch of hicks, though."

Sam resented the term "hicks," when it referred to the people of Saquoit. He sort of felt that he belonged to them himself.

"It's too bad the Cap'n won't come in with us on this oyster deal and grab some change. I like him, and I'd like to see him make a good thing. I tell you what, you are from the city, and know a whole lot more about business and all that than some of the men around here," he said flatteringly, "wouldn't you like to make a bit of change yourself?"

Sam was not interested in making a "bit of change," but he was wise enough to see that it might be of value to hear what the promoter had to offer.

"Well—" he began.

"It's like this, the old Cap'n is stubborn. Thinks we're tryin' to put something over on the folks, I can see that, all right. Now he likes you. Can't you initiate him into the way money is made in the city, and persuade him that this slow goin' way don't amount to shucks? He'll listen to you. I'll make it worth your while if you can drop him a word or two and have him come into the fold. How about it?"

Sam was angry, so angry that his first thought was to tell Hastings just what he

thought of his rotten scheme. His eye travelled to the handle of a broken oar at his feet. How he'd like to beat up this slick appearing promoter—and then he stopped. "Losin' your head, Sam" seemed to come to him from Uncle Seth.

"How could I, a boy, influence an old man like him? He would think I was fresh," said Sam craftily.

Sam was amused, as he thought what a fool the man must be to think he would try to persuade Uncle Seth to sell his oyster grant, or buy stock in the enterprise.

"Easiest thing in the world," palavered Hastings. "Have a smoke," proffering Sam a cigarette.

"No, thank you, I don't smoke," said Sam stiffly.

"Not in public, eh," laughed the promoter, pleased with himself.

"Not anywhere," said Sam.

"Well, well, you are a good boy. Now, look here. How would fifty dollars strike you for winnin' over the old man? You are a born salesman, I can see that," said he

wheedlingly. "If you succeed in selling the Cap'n even ten shares of that stock, I'll give you fifty good, hard, iron men."

Sam was tying the *Cynthia B.* and said nothing. To him, who had always had an ample allowance from his father, and incidentally now had over three hundred dollars in the Saquoit bank, as his part of the reward for capturing the forger, fifty dollars was no temptation, even if he had the remotest idea of doing anything as silly as trying to persuade Uncle Seth to come into the company.

"Make it a hundred," declared Hastings, finally, as they walked up the lane, thinking that the lad was wavering.

"I'll think it over," Sam said, as they parted at the fork of the road.

"Atta boy, it'll be a hundred easy money, besides doin' the old man a good turn."

"Didn't thank him for my tow," said Sam to himself, "but, thank goodness, I didn't spill the beans by 'losing my head.' "

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIGHTING WHALE

ALTHOUGH Uncle Seth protested, Sam arranged to buy another mast for the *Cynthia B.* to take the place of the broken one. He fully realized that he had been at fault, and it was nothing more than right for him to repair the damage.

"I turned her just the least bit and over she went, Uncle Seth," he said to the Captain, as they were unshipping the broken stick the next morning.

"She yawed, 'fore ye knew it, most likely," said Uncle Seth. "Runnin' with the wind, a boat's liable to do that, unless ye watch her sharp."

"Guess I was dreaming," said Sam.

"Wal, I'll tell ye. When you're sailin' before the wind, sometimes its better not to bring the wind directly aft because the boat's yawin' will like enough make ye jibe. That's jest

what happened. Sail with the wind on one quarter, and then if you don't know how to jibe easy, come about, and have the wind on t'other quarter. Now I can jibe a purpose without trouble, 'cause I've sailed years where you've sailed minutes," he finished with a smile. Not a reproach, not a bit of scolding, but just a simple explanation. That was one of the things about Uncle Seth that had drawn the boy towards him.

"I must take ye out, and teach ye to jibe, proper," went on the old sailor. "You've been at this sailin' long enough now, and have the hang of it so's you'll ketch on."

"I guess there are quite a few things I have to learn," said Sam, smiling ruefully. "I'll know enough to reef next time there's a stiff breeze."

"Sho, it might have happened jest the same if you had a reef in, though not so likely. It's a good idea to reef a leetle mite 'fore you think you'd oughter, if you know what I mean. Takin' too many chances sailin' a boat is sunthin' like the Frenchman whose son was drowned. The Frenchman had told him not

to take chances, but the boy knew it all, and one day they brought him home drowned. The Frenchman felt turrible bad, of course, and he says, 'Poor boy, he know better next time.' Sometimes there ain't no next time, any more than there was with that boy.

"Mebbe, it's because I'm gittin' older, but I don't believe in bein' careless, and I'm not so keen about not showin' the white feather around the water as I was once. I don't mean that sailin' is dangerous; it ain't, not a mite, you jest want to use common sense.

"Speakin' of takin' chances, I see that lesson beat into a feller once. It's quite a long story, so we better set down here on the wharf. It was in the seventies. I was master of the whaleship *Mary Ellen*. She's the one I run for quite a spell.

"I had a mate along with me by the name of Ben Porter. Ben was an able seaman, and a good mate, but he'd never gut command of a vessel, and all on account of one thing: he knowed too darn much. I took him on mate as a favor to Old Ambrose Porter, his uncle, who owned sunthin' in the *Mary Ellen*. He

was anxious that I should take Ben and see if I couldn't git some of the cockiness out of him. He knew the sea, and he knew whalin', but he somehow lacked a balance wheel, and it was all on account of him bein' so sure of himself and his judgment.

"Wal, I took young Ben aboard, and, 'fore we started, he and I had a talk in which he confided to me that he ought to be a master right then, but things had worked against him. Oh, he was a good whaleman, he admitted it," chuckled the old Captain.

"I didn't tell him that I knowed why he hadn't sailed his own ship 'fore that. Thought I'd see how he acted on the voyage, and then I never believe in tellin' a man all his shortcomin's: it's sometimes better to let him have his warp plenty long, and mebbe he'll find 'em out himself.

"We went along purty comfortable, with Ben tellin' me, once in a while, how I ought to do things, but I didn't git riled none. The men didn't like him very much, but they only laughed at him behind his back, and that was as fur as it went.

"We gut up into the northern waters along in May, and things was busy with us. Ice was plenty, but we dodged the big bergs pretty well. Ben struck as many whales as any of us; but, I tell ye, when we gut back to ship and towed in the whales, we gut the whole story from Ben how he'd done the job. It was amazin' how much he'd been able to pick up, about how everything ought to be done," laughed Uncle Seth.

"One day we gut afoul of a right whale that was a bad actor. Once in a while, we run on to what the whalemen call fightin' whales, that jest go wild and won't be killed. They'll ram whale boats and cut up scanderlous. A whaleman knows them kind the minute he sees 'em, and if his judgment is good, he'll jest leave 'em be and go on to the next one.

"Wal, as I say, we sighted this lone whale. He warn't the biggest whale I ever see, but he was purty good size. Two boats lowered for him, and, when they gut nigh enough to strike, I see from the ship,—I was stayin' on board that trip,—that he was a fighter.

"A right whale ain't gut any teeth, as

I've told ye, but he strikes a wicked blow with his flukes, and sometimes rams a whale boat. A real lively one don't need any teeth, I'll tell ye. Ben's boat struck this whale and he begun to act mad the minute he was struck. Stood on his tail, and turned his old head this way and that, lookin' to see if he could find out what it was that hit him. I was watchin' with my glass from the deck.

"Instid of waitin' to let the whale run, or sound, or sunthin', and gittin' him kinder tired out, Ben took in line and drove that whaleboat right for him then and there. He was goin' to kill the whale right off, without any delay. I reckon he thought he would show me a thing or two about lancin' a whale.

"Wal, Sam, he drove that boat right up to the big black critter and says I, to myself, this is where Ben learns sunthin' about whales. I hadn't liked the way the old bull whale had been actin', and if Ben knowed half as much as he pretended, he'd read the writin' on the wall, too. Jest as they was pushin' up to the whale, with Ben standin' in the bow with lance ready, them big flukes went up in the air and,

'fore you could spit, they came down on the stern of that boat, takin' it right off, and all the boat's crew was catapulted up in the air more'n twenty feet. I could see 'em fairly flyin'.

"I run up signals to the other boat to go to their rescue, in fact, they was nigh there anyway, and they picked 'em up without much trouble. In the meantime, the whale was nosin' around too close to 'em for comfort, and strikin' the water and pieces of the stove boat with his flukes.

"When they gut 'em aboard, Ben was lookin' purty sober; but he begun to tell how it was that he missed the critter, and if this thing or that thing had been different, he'd have landed him sure.

"The carpenter said he thought he could repair the boat, if we'd git it aboard, as it warn't altogether destroyed.

"'All right,' says Ben, 'I'll take a boat and go after it.'

"'Ben,' says I, 'you ain't gut any intention of mixin' up with that whale again, have ye? You ought to know that that's a fighter;

I could tell that jest as soon as you struck.'

" 'I'll look out for him, Cap'n,' says Ben. 'Mebbe he's a fighter, but so be I,' and he went over the side into the boat.

" 'You let that whale alone,' I called after him. He didn't make no reply, jest as though he hadn't heard me, and they made off.

"Now the boat was between the ship and the whale; and, instead of stoppin' when they gut to it, they kept right on toward the whale, and I see Ben in the bow again with his lance. The whale was tail to 'em, kinder flappin' his flukes, still mad as a dog with a sore paw. Mebbe two boats lengths from him the whale veered around broadside to Ben and broadside to the ship.

"There warn't no good for me to signal Ben, for he'd heard my order all right. Slow, the whale boat came up to the whale and Ben jammed the lance into him; only this time Ben yelled 'Starn all,' quick, for the big bull went rarin' round and round like he was crazy, and I think mebbe he was. The harpoon line was still on the critter, but it warn't fast to

nothin' after the boat was stove; and this line, tanglin' him up, maddened him all the more probably.

"In his floppin' and racin' 'round he stopped sudden, and I knew he'd gut his eye on sunthin'. It warn't a minute 'fore I knowed what it was. It was the ship. Down he come for us, straight as an arrer, and as speedy as a torpedor. I never see anything cut the water as that feller did. Say, he struck us so quick and with sech a shock that I was knocked flat. The whole vessel shuddered and shook as though she'd been welted by a lightnin' bolt.

"I scrambled to my feet jest as the second mate shot from the bow with a bomb gun, and, sence the whale sorter stunned himself by hittin' the ship, and was layin' still, the bomb gun finished him, he lay fin out in hardly more time than it takes to tell it.

"I called all hands below to see if the old *Mary Ellen* had been stove to pieces. We found a hole in her as big as a half bushel measure and the water comin' in purty lively."

"Then she didn't sink?" asked Sam, who supposed that if a hole was stove in a vessel she sank immediately.

"I'll tell ye," said Uncle Seth. "Jest as soon as I see this hole in her, I made up my mind that I could save her, if we worked sharp. The hole was in a good place for us. It was in the bluff of her bow. Now, the *Mary Ellen* was what the sailors call tender: that is, she'd keel over easy. I fust gut a small sail over the hole, and that checked the inflow of water considerbul; then I hove up the anchor—"

"You didn't think you could sail her with a hole in her bow, did you?" interrupted Sam, and in an instant was sorry, for Uncle Seth grinned.

"That's jest what Ben Porter said. Ben had come aboard jest then.

"As I say, I hove up the anchor and gut the vessel right alongside a big cake of ice. I punctured holes in this ice and made fast my cuttin' tackles to it. Then I hove 'em taut, broke out the cargo from the stove side and pressed it to the opposite quarter. She was

half full of water by this time; but you see when the cargo was shifted the water all come over to that side, so the hole was lifted well above the water line. The carpenter put in a new piece of plank, caulked, and coppered it, and after pumpin' the ship out and puttin' the cargo back where it belonged, there we was all hunky dory."

"Well," said Sam with a sigh, "that was some experience. Wasn't it lucky for you that there wasn't any sea?"

"The sea is allus smooth in those ice fields," said the old Cap'n.

"How did Ben Porter feel, after being such a fool?" asked Sam.

"I tell ye, Sam," said Uncle Seth earnestly, "Ben Porter was a changed man. We was in the Ar'tic all the rest of the season and you never see a feller that suppld down the way he did. He took right holt as mate, and didn't try tellin' me nothin' about how to run things. When we finally gut home and gut all ready to leave the ship, he come to me with all his cockiness out of him, and wanted to know if he could ship with me as mate the next voyage.

“ ‘Tell ye, Cap’n, I’ve learned a lot on this voyage,’ he says. ‘If I can go with ye another three year, and if you thought I’d done well enough, then I might try to git a berth as master.’ You see, I never mentioned the thing to him all the rest of the voyage. He was expectin’ a great goin’ over but I kept still, fer I thought, if that lesson didn’t soak in without a lecture from me, he was a hopeless case. But it soaked in,” chuckled Uncle Seth.

CHAPTER XVIII

TWO MORE VISITORS

SAM had been to ride with Tom, away down on the Cape where Tom had heard they were raising asparagus with new methods of cultivation. It had been a long ride, and it was dark when Tom's little flivver pulled up at Uncle Seth's gate.

"That you, Sam?" came Uncle Seth's voice from the front porch. "Come right in, we've been waiting supper for you. Your father has got some company," he explained, as Sam hustled in. "Don't stop to change yer clothes; jest wash up and come along."

When the boy entered the lighted sitting room, there was his father's lawyer, Mr. Morton, whom he had met before, and another man whom Mr. Hotchkiss introduced as Mr. Stetson.

In a flash, Sam knew they had come about

the Shellfish Company. "Wonder who Mr. Stetson is," thought Sam. His father did not leave him long in doubt, but explained, in an aside to him, that Mr. Stetson was the district attorney.

Sam almost shouted. Just think of it, the big fellow of them all taking up the fight. Maybe that wasn't why they were here at all. Perhaps it was just a social visit with his father. No, that couldn't be. He'd just wait and see.

He had no time to ask his father further questions, for just then Aunt Cynthia came in and said that, if they didn't come to supper pretty soon, it wouldn't be fit to eat, as she'd had it on the back of the stove for an hour already.

Sam was hungry, and his interest in the visit of the two lawyers affected his appetite not at all. He went at his supper as though everything tasted good: and everything did. His father spoke to Mr. Stetson and said, "See this," motioning to Sam, "how'd you like to be able to eat like that?"

"Heavens, wouldn't I though!" said Mr. Stetson with a smile.

Sam looked up grinning and said, "You can if you're here long enough and go with me all day in the open."

"I believe you, boy," said the district attorney.

"Oh," drawled Uncle Seth, "he's moderate now to what he is sometimes. He sometimes eats five pertaters with meat and fixin's at a meal, besides three or four glasses of milk; but you see tonight he ain't et but three pertaters and he ain't goin' to eat his berry pie at all, probably."

"You just watch me, Uncle Seth, and see if I don't," said Sam, who did not mind Uncle Seth's chaffing. "If our cook at home knew how to make the food taste as good as Aunt Cynthia does, I'd eat like this the year round."

"There, there, Sam," protested Aunt Cynthia, "I've et at your house and you have real good victuals. Don't you mind Uncle Seth's foolin'. A growin' boy needs plenty

of good victuals." She was secretly very pleased to have Sam praise her cooking. She had no cause to complain tonight, for all the men, including the district attorney, devoured the hot biscuits and fried chicken as though they had had nothing to eat for weeks.

"Mrs. Nickerson," said Lawyer Morton, as he helped himself to another glass of the foaming milk, "you must think we starve at home by the way we eat, but I can assure you that I haven't tasted anything like these biscuits since I was a boy."

"Me, too," gulped Mr. Stetson. "I'm ashamed of my appetite. There's something about this Cape air that certainly does wonders to a man. I've been cooped up in my office for a whole year without a day off, and coming down in the car today put ten years on my life. It's an imposition for Mr. Hotchkiss to bring us in on you; but I, for one, enjoy it."

"Have another piece of the berry pie, Mr. Stetson, it won't hurt ye a mite," beamed Aunt Cynthia.

"Can't eat another mouthful," sighed the lawyer. "I'll tell you what I will do, I'll help you clear off the table and wash up the dishes."

"Me, too," said both Mr. Hotchkiss and Mr. Morton.

"No, you won't, the idee! Besides, Melisse Adams is out in the kitchen now, waitin' to do 'em up. I sent over for her, as I do sometimes when I git driv up. You men have got plenty to talk over. You jest go in the parlor and be company."

"By the way," said the district attorney, "does this Miss Adams know who your company is? I should prefer no one would know that I am here. I'll tell you confidentially," he went on in a low voice, "it is about the Shellfish Company."

"Oh," breathed Aunt Cynthia, "I'm so glad you've come. That business has been worryin' Seth a pile. No, I won't say a word. I jest told Melissey it was some friends of Mr. Hotchkiss."

This explained to Sam what he had been aching to know. This was getting interest-

ing. If the district attorney was taking up this oyster business, Sam's hunch about it being crooked was not so far out of the way, perhaps.

The men adjourned to the "settin' room," under protest from Aunt Cynthia, who had lighted up the parlor. The men vetoed the idea of using the parlor, seconded by Uncle Seth, who declared that he never felt like goin' in the parlor unless he was all duded up.

"Now, Captain Nickerson," began the district attorney, "tell me all you know about this Eastern Shellfish Company and its promoters."

Uncle Seth told them all he knew, and what he had heard about the village.

"They haven't published any circulars or letters, have they?" asked lawyer Morton.

"Not that I know of. I haven't heard of any."

"They are pretty careful about that. That was the first thing that made me suspicious that all wasn't as it should be," declared Stetson.

"Do you know if they ever have had a

third party witness the conversation, when they are talking with a possible customer?" asked Mr. Morton.

"I was listening in the coal bin, sir," Sam interrupted eagerly, "when Hastings told Uncle Seth about what a good business they were doing in Delaware."

"So you was, Sam," said Uncle Seth.

"Well, well, my boy," said the district attorney, "tell us all you heard. You may be our important witness who'll jail these fellows."

Sam recited the conversation, as he had heard it from his hiding place where he could look through the cracks and see Hastings. He told his story clearly, and when he got through the district attorney was much pleased.

"I don't mind telling you that I have had a man here in Saquoit for some time, gathering information for me," he said.

"A detective," gasped Sam. "I'll bet it was Mr. Hatherway."

"Well, he calls himself Hatherway here,"

smiled the district attorney, "but his real name is Abbott."

"Abbott, why he's one of the keenest criminal investigators in the east. There couldn't be more than one by that name. Do you mean S. S. Abbott, the famous detective?" asked Sam with his eyes bulging.

"Yes, Steel Spring Abbott, we call him. I sent a good man because these crooked stock schemes are getting too common, and I wanted to get the goods on these chaps here, for I feel that they are no new hands at it."

"Steel Spring Abbott," grinned Sam, "and we've been sailing with him and didn't know he was a detective. I persuaded Mrs. Stearns to take him to board. Why, Tom and I told him all about Hastings, and all about the people who had sold their grants—"

"I haven't a doubt of it," laughed the district attorney. "That's a habit of his,—to get people to talk. I had a message from him yesterday, and he is about ready to spring the trap and catch his birds. I want to get in touch with him without it being known,

for this man Hastings and his partner are slippery."

"Wal, you can't git holt of him tonight, for I happen to know that he was headed for Masonville this afternoon and won't be back before tomorrer. He was goin' over there to go eelin' with Eph Backus, though I don't see what he wanted to go way over there for to ketch a mess er eels."

"He probably wanted to talk with this man Backus," suggested Mr. Hotchkiss.

"Sartin," laughed Uncle Seth, "that's it. Eph is one of the fellers that has bought stock and has been hollering for Hastings."

"We've spoiled their game anyway," said the district attorney. "They have, or at least Hastings has, stated before Sam here that the company is doing business and making profits, when I happen to know that isn't the fact. They haven't so much as a shed in Delaware. That, in itself, is enough to send them up. But we want to get the money back for these people who have bought stock. I'll have to wait for Abbott, so I guess I'll run over to

Bainrich or somewhere and stay at a hotel there, for Hastings might recognize me if I stopped at the Wescussett."

"Hotel nothin'," snorted Uncle Seth. "You're goin' to stay right here. Why, I wouldn't feel right if you went anywhere else. Termorrer we'll go out to the Ledge and git some tautog or go crabbin' or sunthin'. You fellers need a leetle fun mixed in."

"Of course, you're going to stay here," chimed in Aunt Cynthia, who had been listening with bated breath all through the evening. The ways of Aunt Cynthia had been quiet and uneventful, but all the talk of the district attorney had brought the pink of excitement to her cheeks.

"I don't believe I shall sleep a wink to-night," she quavered as the men started off to their chambers.

"So?" laughed Uncle Seth. "You'll be snorin' with the rest of us in three minutes after you git into bed."

"Seth Nickerson, you ought to be ashamed; I never snore, never, and you know it.

You're the one that sounds like the fog horn when you git started."

Everybody laughed at Aunt Cynthia's spirited attack upon the Captain, and it seemed to bring her thoughts back from the sordid paths of criminals and she allowed she "could mebbe git calmed down after a spell."

CHAPTER XIX

AFTER BLUE CLAWS

SAM decided that he would not mention to Hatherway that he knew him to be a detective. Sam wasn't even going to tell Tom, though he knew Tom could keep a secret. No, sir, he was going to see just how an honest to goodness detective went about his work when he thought himself unobserved.

He lost no time the next morning in going over to Tom's. Much to his disappointment, Hatherway was not there. He had started out in the early morning for a tramp, as he explained to Mrs. Stearns, and might not be back before night.

"Funny duck," said Tom. "Pretty good scout, too. He never says very much. Remember when we had him out sailing we did most of the talking. He's quiet around the house when he's here, which isn't very often.

Never talks about himself, what he does for a living, where he lives, or anything."

"Well, well, Tom," said his mother, "there isn't any reason in the world why Mr. Hatheway has got to tell us all his business. He's a nice gentlemanly sort of a man and never puts on any airs nor makes a complaint. I like him real well."

"Oh, I like him," Tom hastened to say. "I was only saying that he's odd."

Sam was just aching to tell them that they were entertaining one of the foremost detectives unawares, but he kept his lips closed.

"We're going crabbing," said Sam finally. "Can't you come along, Tom?"

"I'd like to, Sam," Tom replied, "but I've got more work to do than you can shake a stick at. Some time the first of the week I'll be little more free. Then we'll have to get in some fun."

Sam hurried back to Uncle Seth's, and found all hands ready for the shore. The old captain had provided every one with a long handled net for snaring the elusive blue claws, and they were off. Mr. Morton and

the district attorney wore sou'westers, both because it was a nasty morning, and also to further conceal their identity, should they meet any one who knew them in their ordinary garb.

The district attorney proved to be a good sport. He insisted upon carrying his part of the dunnage, and, with his hearty laughter and jokes, Sam thought him quite different from what he supposed a district attorney would be.

"What do you do with these hair nets?" he laughingly inquired of Uncle Seth. "Throw it over their heads?"

"You tell him, Sam," replied Uncle Seth. "Sam is gettin' to be the champeen crab netter."

Sam explained to the lawyer how the nets were to be used, telling him how wary the blue claw crab is: that he moves in any direction with a speed and quickness that belies his clumsy appearance.

"You'll get on to it after a bit," Sam assured him, "after you see how it is done."

"You ought to have had enough experience

netting criminals," said Mr. Hotchkiss, with a smile, "so you could catch a silly crab."

"That may be so, Hotchkiss," replied the district attorney, "but criminals that I have had experience with didn't have as many legs as Sam says these crabs have."

The *Cynthia B.* trailed two skiffs after her, for when they got to the crab country the sail boat would be anchored and the party would use the smaller row boats.

"There, now," said Uncle Seth, as Sam heaved over the anchor, "we are here at jest the right time. 'Bout half tide, on the ebb. We ought to git a plenty. I ain't goin' to fish this mornin'. I'll jest row one boat 'round. Now, all hands git ready. Sam, you take Mr. Stetson in one boat, and I'll take yer father and Mr. Morton in t'other."

Sam pushed the boat stern first, and the district attorney stood on the after seat and had a great time. He agreed that the crab is a deceiving little shellfish. When he missed one he didn't seem to mind but laughed heartily at the ludicrous spectacle of the racing crab.

"I have you," he shouted, as he made a swoop, and a kicking snapping blue claw fell from his net into the boat.

"Sam, this is great sport, isn't it?" he exclaimed. "I'd like to stay down here for a month. Wouldn't it be great to have a summer of it?"

"I like it," said Sam. "I didn't think I was going to when I first came, but I changed my mind pretty soon."

After a while, the lawyer insisted that, if they were going to beat the other boat, Sam would have to take a hand and let him row. Under protest Sam did so, and Uncle Seth had made no mistake in saying Sam was a champion, for soon the bottom of the skiff was alive with them.

"We'll leave 'em right in the boats till we git ashore," said Uncle Seth. "Git aboard."

"Just to think of having a summer here," reiterated the district attorney.

"Guess we'll have a good mess," said Uncle Seth, on the way back in the *Cynthia B.*

"You mean just the people at your house

can eat all of these blue claws," exclaimed Mr. Morton in astonishment.

"I reckon, when they're b'iled, with plenty of melted butter to pour over the meat, you'll be surprised how many we can git away with."

"I think you misjudge our appetites," laughed the district attorney. "I think half as many might furnish us all we could eat."

Uncle Seth laughed. "You think my judgment's poor on victuals; wal, mebbe it is, anyway it ain't so bad as a feller's we had on board a mackerel boat one summer.

"It was when I was a young feller, I went out with the mackerel boat one time, between whalin' trips. We was jest about to pull out from the wharf when a feller run down to tell the captain that the cook was sick, or some of his folks was sick, or sunthin', and couldn't come. Wal, that was a great thing, jest as we was about to start and everybody in a hurry. The old man tore 'round some, but he swore he wouldn't spare the time to go ashore and hunt up another cook.

"'Cast off thar,' he sings out. 'What's a

cook more or less?' When we got outside, the captain yelled to one of the men up forrard and he went back. 'You're the cook,' says the captain.

" 'Cook?' says the feller. 'No, sir, I ain't the cook. You're mistook.'

" 'You've jest been elected,' says the captain with a grin.

" 'Who done it?' says the feller.

" 'I did. Git inter the galley, and work sharp, and git the supper ready.'

" 'Look here, Cap'n,' says the fisherman, 'I can't cook. I can't b'ile water 'thout burn-in' it on.'

" 'High time ye learned, then,' snapped the captain; and the feller went into the galley, as bewildered as anybody could be.

"He didn't know what to git fer supper, and after pawin' 'round amongst the packages and boxes he couldn't git any idees; so up he come, and went over to the cap'n.

" 'What'll I git 'em for supper?' he asked.

" 'How should I know?' says the old man, not wantin' to be bothered. 'Git 'em some b'iled rice.'

“ ‘Guess I can b’ile rice, if all you have to do is to b’ile it,’ says the new cook. ‘How much shall I allow to a man?’

“ ‘I dunno, le’s see there’s fifteen all told. Oh, put in about a cup full for each man, guess that’ll be enough.’

“Wal,” grinned Uncle Seth, “he measured out fifteen cups and two or three more fer good measure and after he had put it in a kittle, his mind was easy about supper. Mebbe you know how rice swells when it’s cookin’,” he grinned, and all the men chuckled as they nodded assent.

“After a while the rice commenced to swell in the kittle, till the new cook had to dish some of it into another kittle. Still the rice swelled and begun to overflow both kittles, and he kept dishin’ into other kittles, till he didn’t have no kittles left. Then he begun to fill other dishes. Purty soon he had the top of the galley stove covered. Then, as all the dishes on the stove warn’t enough to hold all the white swellin’ stuff, he begun to cover the table and shelves with dishes full of it. He had a marvelous lot of it. Finally every

single thing he had was full and overflowin' with b'iled rice.

"Come supper time and he begun to cart that rice into the men's eatin' quarters: the captain et there too. The cook thought he'd give 'em all there was of the stuff, so he kept bringin' it in. Pans and kittles and pots and basins, all full of b'iled rice. It covered the long table till there warn't no room for nothin' else. Purty soon the men come in to eat, and the cap'n took one look at the pecks and pecks of b'iled rice. Then he hollered, 'Cooke, have ye saved any for yourself?'"

The two lawyers were convulsed as Uncle Seth proceeded with his story. Sam and Mr. Hotchkiss laughed to see how well the two city men appreciated a story of the old skipper, the like of which they had long enjoyed.

"Fifteen cupfuls," gasped the district attorney, slapping Mr. Morton upon the back. "Did you ever hear the beat of that. I'd give a good deal to tell that as you did, Captain."

Uncle Seth didn't consider himself a story

teller, and was quite embarrassed by the enthusiastic manner in which his story had been received.

As the party walked toward the house carrying the buckets of squirming crabs, Uncle Seth said in a low tone to Sam:

"I should never dare to let Ben Peters tell them fellers one of his real funny ones. They'd have apoplexy sure, the both of 'em."

CHAPTER XX

THE NET CLOSES

“**I** WISH we had Hastings over here,” said the district attorney that night. “Of course, I could send for him and bring him over; but if we could get him in not suspecting, we might, by a surprise attack, so to speak, have him blurt out something that he wouldn’t if he were arrested first.”

Sam then told the district attorney about Hastings’ offer of a hundred dollars, which he had pretended to consider.

“That’s the very thing, young man. Go to the phone and call him up. He’ll think you have reached a favorable decision.”

Sam accordingly went to the telephone, and, after being connected with the Wescusset House, he asked for Mr. Hastings.

“Hello, Mr. Hastings,” said Sam, “this is Sam Hotchkiss at Captain Nickerson’s, you

remember? Well, can you come over this evening?"

"Sure, kid, have you landed the old man? Is everything all right?"

"Yes," answered Sam, with a smile on his lips, "everything is all right."

"Great work, Sam. You're sure the swift worker. I'll be over in a minute."

It was arranged that Sam should go to the door and admit Hastings. The others would be out of sight when the stock promoter came in. Presently footsteps were heard on the board walk outside.

"Good evening, Mr. Hastings," said Sam cordially. "Come right in."

He showed Hastings into the sitting room, where Uncle Seth sat by the lamp, reading the *Advertiser*.

"Good evenin', Mr. Hastings, won't ye set down?" said Uncle Seth, affably.

Hastings waited for Sam or Uncle Seth to make the first move. Uncle Seth cleared his throat and began.

"I've been hearin' about these 'ere dividends that some of these fellers have been

gittin', who have stock in your company, and I want to ask some questions."

"Ask away, Cap'n," replied Hastings cheerfully. He felt that things were coming his way. He wondered how much money the old man would be good for.

"In the first place," began Uncle Seth, "where did the dividends come from?" Hastings didn't mean to make any false moves, but now things were so near a climax he felt he was in no danger.

"Came from our plant in Delaware," he explained. "They are doing a rattling business down there." He expatiated at length on the wonderful amount of profits that were being made in the Delaware end of the business.

"Sho," said the old man, musingly. "That's better'n twenty per cent. How long do you think that'll keep up?" he asked credulously.

Hastings smiled inwardly and outwardly. The boy Sam had certainly made the old captain easy to talk to. It was worth a hundred, if he had to pay it. "Keep up," he



Quick as a flash the boy made a dive, grabbing the promoter around the legs.

said, "why, my dear Cap'n Nickerson, there isn't any end to it. We aim to take over the shellfish business all along the coast. It will be a big thing."

"That's enough, Captain Nickerson," said the district attorney, as he strode briskly into the room. "Talked more than I thought he would. It wasn't necessary, we had all the evidence we needed without this."

"A frame up," snarled Hastings, and made a dash for the door. Sam's only thought was that this chap mustn't get away. Quick as a flash the boy made a dive, grabbing the promoter around the legs, just below the knees: as pretty a football tackle as Sam ever made on the field. Both went to the floor, chairs were overturned, but Sam hung on. Just as Hastings was sliding his hand around to his hip pocket, it was Uncle Seth who brought a scream of pain from the promoter, by a forceful backward twist that the old skipper gave his arm.

A sharp rap at the door was answered by Lawyer Morton, and into the room came Hatherway, or Steel Spring Abbott, half

dragging Brander, handcuffed, with his face white and drawn with fear.

"Ah, Abbott," said the district attorney, "I see you've landed your man."

"Yes," quickly responded the detective, "and I would have landed Hastings, but they said he was over here. Why, here he is now! All right, Sam, get up, and I'll put the bracelets on him. There now, we have both and I've enough on them, Chief, to send them up for twenty years. Did you know they planned to beat it tonight? Got all the money in that little satchel. They had sold about all their stock, and were going to jump the night train for Middleboro and Fall River. Caught 'em just in time. I find that Hastings is wanted in New York for a scrape he pulled off over there last year. His partner, here, isn't in quite so deep, as far as I can find out."

"I wish you had some help so you could take them to Bainrich in my car tonight," said Mr. Stetson.

"I've got some help, all right. I have a chap outside that the Sheriff Barnes loaned me. He's a walking arsenal," laughed the

detective. He opened the door and called out, "Hey, constable, come in here."

Out from the shadows of the porch glided Sam's friend, Azariah Jackson, a revolver on either hip, and carrying his shot gun. His star glittered proudly from his breast as he stood in the doorway.

"Hello," said Uncle Seth, who had been too dumfounded by the excitement to speak before. "Why in the Sam Hill didn't you come in, Azariah? What you hanging 'round out there for?"

"Never mind, Cap'n," replied the constable. "I know my business. I was pertectin' the several avenues of escape. If one of them fellers had ever showed himself outside that door, by the Jumpin' Jeremiah! he'd er met me, and don't yew fergit it. I was the last line of defense, Sethie." With that he straightened up, and stuck out his chest to the bursting point.

It was finally arranged that Constable Jackson and the detective should start for Bainrich immediately in the district attorney's car, with his chauffeur. During the discus-

sion of arrangements Hastings had said nothing, but looked from one to another of the company with a puzzled expression upon his face.

"Say," he finally burst out to the detective, "how'd you happen on our trail, way down here in the bush?"

"Ask the Chief," Abbott answered shortly.

"I don't mind telling you," said the district attorney, "that I heard of you within a week after you began your work, through Cap'n Nickerson and this lad here."

"Gee," muttered the crook, "this hick town ain't so far from the red lights, after all."

CHAPTER XXI

THE AUCTION

A WEEK had passed since the sensational arrest of the two stock promoters. The village of Saquoit was never so stirred as by the news that the Eastern Shellfish Company had been dissolved. The news came to the inhabitants first through the fact that numerous citizens had received summons to appear in Court, and give testimony in the case of the Commonwealth versus Hastings and Brander. These notices caused much uneasiness. What did it mean? Those who had been loudest in their praises of the stock company were now the most uneasy.

Almost without exception they brought their trouble to Uncle Seth. The old Captain took no advantage of their fright to say, "I told you so." No word of censure came from the old skipper. He patiently explained

to each one that the scheme had fallen through, and Hastings and Brander had been arrested.

The two promoters were brought to trial and the evidence gathered by the detective, with Sam's testimony, was so conclusive, that Hastings and Brander were given the maximum sentence. When they should complete their term of imprisonment, the New York police were to bring an old charge of fraud against them.

After the trial, when investors in the scheme had had their money and their oyster grants returned, the village relaxed into its former quietude. Uncle Seth and Aunt Cynthia were happy once more, with no shadow of fear for their friends and neighbors to bother them.

"Wal," remarked Uncle Seth, shoving back his chair from the breakfast table, "things seem to be purty well straightened out. Them two fellers are in jail. The folks have all gut back their money and their oyster grants, and it's a sunny mornin'. I'm goin' over to Lem Henrick's old place to an auction. Anybody want to go along?"

"Auction?" asked Sam. "What do they sell?"

"Everything from clothespins to yearlin' heifers," grinned Uncle Seth. "Didn't you ever go to a real out and out country auction?"

Sam admitted that he never had. His father and mother also said they had not attended an auction since they were children.

"What do you say we all go?" suggested Mr. Hotchkiss. "I'll get a car and take you all over."

"Fine," agreed Sam.

The ladies discussed it, and finally decided that they, too, would go. "There may be some antiques that I could buy," said Sam's mother.

"Wal," said Captain Nickerson, slowly, "I guess everything they've got on the place is old enough to suit anybody. Even the pair of horses that's up for sale is so old they have to lean against one another to keep from fallin' down. Yes, I guess there'll be antiques enough to suit you. The place used to be kept up and was a good farm; but late years there ain't been nobuddy live there but two

old maid sisters, and now they've gone to Middleboro and bought a smaller place in the village, and have their niece live with 'em that teaches school over there. I can remember when it was a purty prosperous farm, as farms went on Cape Cod in them days. The old man Lem was a worker, but when the young man took holt he warn't no farmer. Young Lem—he warn't so very young neither—was an unpractical kind of a feller. He was more of a scholar than a farmer: thought a sight of books and lectures and sech. The old man wanted him to come home and stay, 'cause he was gittin' old. There was some money, so he really didn't have to make it pay,—which was lucky, for he couldn't have made money, if he could have bought gold dollars for thirty cents apiece.

“Dreadful unpractical, young Lem was. Done the queerest things, and folks got him into scrapes jest to laugh at him. He was purty nigh as bad as the feller I heard of once that had a lot of cobwebs up in his barn loft. It bothered him to have 'em there, and he asked some one how he could git red of 'em.

The feller told him the only way he knowed was to tie a bundle of rags on a long pole, douse 'em with kerosene, and settin' fire to 'em, hold 'em under the cobwebs,—not thinkin' that he'd do it.

“Wal, he done as he was told, and he gut red of the cobwebs, all right; but unfortunately he gut red of his barn at the same time,” he grinned.

“Seth, I don't believe a word of any sech story as that,” declared Aunt Cynthia. “You ought not carry your foolin' too fur.”

“I ain't tellin' it for a fact, Cynthy,” laughed the old man. “I'm jest tellin' ye as it was told me.”

“When shall we start?” asked Mr. Hotchkiss, glancing at his watch.

“I tell ye,” said the old skipper, “I think it would be a good idee to go early and make a day of it, or stay as long as you want to. An auction is the grandest place to visit with folks you ever see. Perhaps you won't care to do that, but it's kind of a purty country, and mebbe you'd like to jest walk around and set under the trees.”

"Sure," said Mr. Hotchkiss, "what do you say that we make it a day? If we get tired of it, we'll come home,—or go to ride."

Every one agreed that it was a fine plan. As usual, Aunt Cynthia began to think about something to eat, and bustled off to the kitchen to prepare a lunch, while Mr. Hotchkiss telephoned for an automobile.

The farm of the Henrick family was half way between Saquoit and the next village of Quassett, and only about a mile from Uncle Seth's cottage. "No need to take an auto for me," declared the Captain, "I could walk it and never know I'd been anywhere."

When they drew up in front of the place, there were several people already on the scene. The house was larger than the ordinary Cape Cod cottage, and evidently Uncle Seth was right in saying that at one time it was a fine place. It was sadly in need of paint, but the beauty of its early days was very apparent. The door in the center of the front was flanked by side lights whose glass was, in its old age, iridescent. The fan light over the

door also shone in various colors in the morning sun.

"What a wonderful house!" exclaimed Mrs. Hotchkiss.

"It is a nice place," agreed her husband.

At the side of the barn a large orchard, with trees in need of pruning, stretched away on a slope, at bottom of which was a cranberry bog grown up to weeds. Looking in the opposite direction, what took Sam's eye was the lower end of Saquoit Harbor, sparkling and blue.

"Oh, Uncle Seth, does this land run right down to the water?" he asked.

"Yep," answered the captain, "this farm is a big one, as farms go around here. About sixty acres, I imagine."

"Sixty acres," thought Sam, "that's a whale of a farm."

"It can't be more than a half a mile by water around to the wharf at Saquoit," he remarked.

"Jest about," said the Captain.

Soon they heard the ringing of a bell and

they hastened back toward the house, for the sale was about to begin.

"Now, Seth," protested his wife, "don't you go to work and buy a lot of truck. We've gut all we want around the house now. You know the last time you went to an auction you bought two barrels of old stuff, that we ain't never unpacked."

"No, Cynthy," he grinned, "I'll be careful. You see," said he, turning to Mrs. Hotchkiss, "I've gut what Cynthy calls the auction habit, and it's wusser'n morphine."

"Seth, how you talk."

The auctioneer stood upon a box in the center of the large door yard with all sorts of goods and chattels piled around him. Beside him, seated at a table with papers and writing materials before him, was a man who evidently was to be clerk of the proceedings.

"Ladies and Gentlemen," the auctioneer began, "this auction is to be conducted for cash. Pay your money and take your purchases away. No cash returned if you find you've been cheated; but you won't be cheated, for you can examine each article

carefully, and then Cavity Empty, or whatever the law says about the buyer bein' stung."

Sam figured out afterward, from what Latin he knew, that what the auctioneer was trying to say was Caveat Emptor, "let the buyer beware."

"Now, the fust thing I'll put up is this genuine hand painted, all wool and a yard wide, set of buffalo robes. These are guaranteed not to split, ravel, or run down at the heel. How much am I offered?"

Sam laughed, for he had not expected anything like this. The people knew the auctioneer, for presently some one attempted to offer a remark.

"Hen, is there a sleigh to be throwed in with them robes?" cackled one old chap, digging the ribs of a companion near him with his thumb.

There was a general laugh, but the auctioneer was used to quips of this kind.

"Hello, Sime, sure we give a sleigh, and a young lady to go drivin' with, too. How much am I offered? Two dollars, two, two, who'll gi' me three? Two and half, a half,

who'll gi' me three? Who'll gi' me three? Three I have. Who'll gi' me a half? A half, a half, a half, who'll gi' me four?"

He was what was known as a capable auctioneer, and Sam was amazed at the rapidity with which he reeled off the jargon of the sale. It was the custom for auctioneers to talk fast and in that way to get the buyers more excited, and more feverish to bid.

"Five and half, five and half, do I hear six? Do I hear a six? Now, Ladies and Gentlemen, the idea of these two robes, as good as they was the day they was bought, goin' for six dollars. Who'll make it a half?" he pleaded.

"Ah! thank you, I have a half, who'll make it a seven? Come on, Ansel, you want these robes; you're feet are allus cold in the winter. Give me a bid of seven. Thank you.

"Eight dollars. Do I hear another bid? Eight dollars and a half, make it nine, make it nine, eight and a half, make it nine. Eight and a half once, eight and a half twice, eight and a half—ah! I hear nine. Nine dollars, make it a half, make it ten, ten, ten, ten, make

it eleven. Ten dollars once, ten dollars twice; do I hear another bid? Ten dollars three times, and sold to Ansel Pinkham for ten dollars, and may the Lord have mercy on your soul."

"Why, this is better than vaudeville," thought Sam. He saw his father wiping his eyes. He had laughed so hard he had cried.

After Sam had listened for a while to the joking between the auctioneer and the crowd, he joined his father and they walked over to the house.

"This house must be old," said his father. "Look at that wainscoting. One can't get any such boards as these nowadays, Sam: nearly two feet wide of good, clear pine; wonderful."

The fine workmanship of the interior finish was evident even to Sam, who knew next to nothing about such things. His father appreciated it all. The winding staircase with its round mahogany hand rail, the huge fireplaces with their cupboards and old fashioned brick ovens,—all of these Mr. Hotchkiss exclaimed over, again and again.

"Look at these big square chambers, Sam," he called, as they were exploring upstairs. "See the view of the harbor from here."

This impressed Sam as no dado or wainscoting could. "Oh, Father, isn't that great? Just think of sleeping here and having the bay to look at the first thing in the morning. Gee! what a view."

At least three of the chambers offered a sight of the water. On the other side of the house they overlooked the orchard and meadow.

His father stood looking out of the window, lost in contemplation. Sam spoke to him several times but he did not answer. He just looked over the expanse of the beautiful Saquoit Bay with its sails and green shores. Sam left him standing there and went on about the house by himself.

From the yard he heard the auctioneer still sing songing.

"Thirty-five, gimme thirty-six. All done at thirty-five. Thirty-five once—"

The hinges of all the doors were rough, —handmade Mr. Hotchkiss had said. The

windows were small paned; the bare floors were of soft wood and the boards were wide and clear of knots. Sam opened the narrow door of a small cupboard and looked in. The opening was long, or rather deep, and smelled musty as he peered into the dark recess.

"Left something here," said Sam, as he pulled a book, which looked like an old account book, from the dusty top shelf. Its edges were yellowed with age. There was something written upon the cover. "Journal of a Whaling Voyage on board the bark *Orray Taft*, V. B. Howland Master, which sailed from New Bedford May 18th, 1869." On each day of the whaling voyage it was recorded what happened.

"Let's see what they did the first day," said Sam.

"'At 9 am got under weigh with a fresh breeze from the N. W. off Dumplin' light—Wind canted to S. W., employed in beating out, securing the anchors etc., for sea,'" he read.

He turned the pages and presently he found the black imprint of a whale in the margin, as

though a rough wooden stamp cut in the shape of a whale had been used. Opposite the next day's record he found three of these. That meant they had taken three whales on that day.

"Gee, this is great!" exclaimed the boy, and settled down to read.

Here was adventure first hand, almost. The log told of captured whales and stove boats, of men lost, and men put in irons, as though it was the merest day's work. He had never seen anything like this. The boy sat in the dusty old chamber with the sun streaming in at the windows, living the voyage of the *Orray Taft* as she battled her way gallantly around Cape Horn. Now he was calling at some of the western islands for water and fruit; later he was fighting the ice floes of Bering Sea and the Arctic. There were reefings when Sam knew a storm was coming up, and he felt the heaving of the *Orray Taft* grow more violent. Would she ride it out? As staunch a vessel as ever took a whale—of course she would.

The storm is passed. Once more the *Orray*

Taft cruises about. Whales are sighted. The boats make off. Sam is pulling an oar with the rest. He is the one who strikes, and yells, "Starn all." Then follows the mad ride after the milling whale. Thrice the giant mammal charges the whale boat. He is coming again. Sam twists and heaves—

"Sam, what on earth is the matter, you act as though you were having convulsions." It was his father who had come to look for him.

Sam came back to earth with a jump.

"Six, gimme seven, six, do I hear a seven?" droned the auctioneer outside.

"Why, Father, I guess I got interested in this whale journal. Just as you spoke a whale was coming for the boat," he laughed. "This is great. I found it in the closet. Suppose I can buy it?" he asked with shining eyes.

"See Uncle Seth, and let him find out for you."

"Guess they didn't set much store by it," said the auctioneer to Uncle Seth. "Gimme a half dollar and it's yourn." Sam paid the money and hugged his prize tightly. The auction had been worth while for Sam.

CHAPTER XXII

TOM STEARNS STAYS EAST

SAM was waiting for Tom to patch an automobile tire. The car was jacked up in Tom's side yard. Both boys were feeling rather mournful, for Tom would not be at Saquoit another summer. He had just received an offer, through the faculty of the Agricultural College, to go west next summer after graduation and take a position upon a large ranch.

"Gee, Tom, I'm glad that you have the offer, but I'm mighty sorry that you won't be here. I shall miss you like everything," said Sam.

"I'm glad of the chance, too," said Tom, "but it will be pretty hard to go. It's the way of the world, I suppose, and since I have the education I need to go wherever I have a good opening. They can't raise any better stuff out there than we can right here, though; but

the trouble is there isn't a job here. Mother feels bad, of course, but she's a good sport and doesn't show it. It seems queer to feel sore about having a good chance to get experience in my line."

"You have a pretty good sized farm here, Tom," said Sam, "why don't you chuck this Oregon job and run your own farm?"

"Why bless you, Sam, this farm of mine is only a few acres. You'd hardly call it a farm. I should feel that I wasn't doing right to settle down here, just because Mother will miss me if I go away. If mine were a fifty acre farm, it would be different, but as it is,—no sir, I'm no baby. To change the subject, your father was up here yesterday. I never supposed he was so interested in farming. He went all over this place with me, and looked into every new scheme I've tried to work. He's a great chap. I found myself talking to him a blue streak about my ideas of small fruits and stock and everything. He must have been bored stiff, but he was polite enough not to show it."

"You bet, Father's a good scout," agreed

Sam. "I've seemed to get better acquainted with him in the two summers that I have been down here than I ever did before."

Mrs. Stearns came out where the boys were, and nodded pleasantly to Sam. "Tom been telling you about his good job out west?" she asked. "Isn't it fine for him to have an opportunity right away after he gets out of school?"

"You will miss him, Mrs. Stearns," said Sam, and in a moment he was sorry, for her face clouded.

"Oh, yes," she answered, with a bright cheeriness that her eyes belied, "but then, we mothers have to expect our boys to leave us. He'll come back here once in a while." She turned and went back into the house, and Sam could almost swear that her eyes filled as she turned away.

"Cheer up, Sam," laughed Tom. "Any one would think it was you who had to go out into the wild and woolly west instead of me. I haven't got to go yet awhile."

"I do feel bad, Tom, and your mother feels

bad, too," said Sam. "I could see, for all her smiles, she didn't like the idea."

"Oh, well, we will all have to get used to it."

"Git used to it," called a cheery voice, "you can git used to anything." It was Uncle Seth, and with him Sam's father.

"Tom is going west next June after his graduation," remarked Sam dolefully.

"So I heard," said Uncle Seth, "but Tom is right, he can get used to it. Git used to anything, most. There warn't ever but one thing that I couldn't git used to."

"What was that?" asked Sam, laughing.

"Camel's hair underclothes," said the old man, "when I was a boy."

"What in the world are camel's hair underclothes?" asked Tom.

"Underclothes that's all wool and prickly—Jimmynetty! warn't they prickly! Fólks allus wore red ones, 'cause they was considered more healthy," he grinned. "I remember I gut some and everybuddy in the family said they'd be good for me, they was so

nice and warm. Wal, they was warm all right. They pricked my skin so I didn't have time, from scratchin', to be cold.

"I was a little shaver, and I guess I whimpered some when they was fust put on; and I'd go around pullin' at 'em, tryin' to git 'em as fur away from me as I could. I was purty miserable. Some of the grown ups laffed at me good for mindin', but Jimmynetty! they, themselves, probably had hides like walruses and they wouldn't have minded hoss blankets next to 'em.

"Long about Thursday each week them tar-nation red things would begin to git a leetle more bearable; and then come Sunday mornin' and I'd have to put on fresh ones and have to go all over it again. My skin jest shivers now to think of it.

"Mother soon found out that I was in misery; and, unbeknownst to Father, she slid out a suit of light cotton ones and I put them on with the red flannel ones over 'em; and then I was as happy as a clam at high tide. Bless her heart, she practiced that deception on Father till them red tormentors wore out, and

then she see to it that I had some that warn't quite so ha'sh," he chuckled.

Sam was feeling itchy himself, hearing Uncle Seth's story. "Gee, that must have been awful, Uncle Seth. I'm glad I didn't live in those times," he laughed.

"Gut that tire so's 'twill hold, Tom?" said Uncle Seth, at length.

"I guess it's all right now, Uncle Seth," replied Tom, screwing the cap on the valve.

"Wal, it ain't very often I beg for a ride, but I've took a notion that I'd like to go over the Oak Holler road. Have you gut time to take us all around there? It won't take very long."

"Sure, I'll take you," said Tom heartily, "if you and Mr. Hotchkiss can stand riding in this old tin can."

"I've rid a rougher sea than she can kick up," chuckled the old skipper.

"The flivver is all right," agreed Sam's father.

"'Tis for a fact," agreed Uncle Seth, as they sped down the lane and out into the main highway.

Presently Tom turned to the right, and Sam said, "This road looks familiar. This is where we went to the auction."

"So it is," remarked Uncle Seth, glancing at Mr. Hotchkiss. "Le's haul up here for a while."

"Yes," said Sam, "here's where I got the whale log book."

"Purty good old place, ain't it?" asked Uncle Seth, his eyes taking in the weather beaten farm house and rough boarded barn.

"You bet," said Tom. "There's sixty acres here of nearly all good land. An orchard that needs a lot of attention but could be brought up. It's a corkin' farm, all right."

"Think it is a good farm, do you, Tom?" asked Mr. Hotchkiss.

"Oh, it's great, or it could be made a great farm. Why, there are so many things that could be made to pay here. Poultry,—it's near the water for ducks,—good orchard, cranberry bog, and lots of good tillage land." Then he went on to dilate on the possibilities of this old farm by the side of Saquoit Bay.

"Well, Tom," began Mr. Hotchkiss, "I've bought this farm."

"Bought it!" cried both boys.

"Yes, I've bought it," replied Mr. Hotchkiss. "I'm no farmer, but I was born on a farm down in Connecticut, and I always have a feeling of content when I'm around one. I bought this farm with the idea of making it pay if I could, but to have loads of fun with it whether I made it pay or not. It will all depend on whether I can get just the right young chap to run it for me—"

"Tom!" yelled Sam, slapping his friend on the back.

"That's what I thought," said Mr. Hotchkiss smilingly.

"Why,—why,—I,—" gulped Tom.

"Oh, won't that be great!" exclaimed Sam. "You won't have to go west after all."

"Perhaps you don't want to consider it," said Mr. Hotchkiss. "There must be good opportunities in the west; but, if you do, I'll pay you the same money you would have out in Oregon, and we can have the tool house

fixed up as a cottage for you and your mother and sister, if you cared to live here rather than in your own house."

"Take it, sir?" said Tom, grasping Mr. Hotchkiss by the hand. "Why, I'd be foolish not to take it. This means a lot to me and will mean a lot to mother," he said, earnestly.

"All right, then," said Sam's father. "Let's get out and look the place over,—although I did that pretty thoroughly at the auction, while Sam was mooning over that log book," he added, laughingly. "I took Uncle Seth into my confidence, and, on his judgment of real estate values, I bought the place privately that same day. The papers were passed yesterday, and now, I suppose, I own my first farm," he smiled.

Tom and Sam sprang out of the car and ran about the yard. Tom was so happy he almost danced, as he sped from one place to another.

"I'll put an architect on this house, right away," said Sam's father, "and I'll let you confer with a good farm architect on the barns. You can put all your ideas on paper

and submit them to me. You may have a chance to do a little thinking on it this winter, even if you are in school."

"Thinking on it!" exclaimed Tom, "I shan't think of anything else. I can make this farm pay, sir," he said, "pay my salary and some besides, I'm sure."

"Of course, I want it to pay, if it will," said Mr. Hotchkiss, "but after you've given me all the farm products I want during the winter, and paid expenses, we'll talk about what we'll do with the surplus. Maybe it ought to go to the manager as an increase in salary."

"Gee!" was all Tom could say.

There was great rejoicing in the Stearns' cottage that night. Tom wired immediately declining the offer from the west; and, with the thought that he would be here in Saquoit with an honest to goodness farm to run, and the kindest of business men for a boss, Tom felt that his cup was running over.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE LAUNCHING

“**C**OME on, Sam,” said Uncle Seth, “we’re goin’ down and christen the new boat this mornin’. Guess we’ll have to all hands look her over, and see how she rides. She’s in the water, all ready to sail.”

“All right, Uncle Seth,” replied Sam, but his tone lacked enthusiasm. He had worked on the new boat with Uncle Seth, and he had come to feel resentment that any such beautiful craft should be sailed by some stranger. However, he wasn’t going to let it spoil his day.

Mr. Hotchkiss, Sam’s mother, and Aunt Cynthia were all on the wharf looking at the new boat as she lay curveting to the westerly breeze.

“Isn’t she a dandy?” said Sam.

“Looks pert, don’t she?” said Uncle Seth.

"Kind of a sassy little craft, now, and no mistake."

"She hasn't any name yet," said the boy.

"No, so she hasn't," spoke up Mr. Hotchkiss, "we'll let the new owner give her a name, and you're the new owner, Sam. Haven't you guessed that by this time?"

"What? Mine? Oh, Father! Uncle Seth! Who do I thank?" he shouted ungrammatically to both men, who were smiling at his eagerness.

"Your father paid for every stick that's in her," said the old captain.

"Yes, I did, but Uncle Seth put time and work into her that he won't take a cent for," said his father. "I persuaded him to build her, and now he won't be paid for his work."

"You old fraud, Uncle Seth," cried the boy, hugging the old man delightedly. "And you told me that it was some fellow up Boston way."

"Wal, yer father lives up Boston way, don't he?" chuckled Uncle Seth.

"Well, it is a surprise. Thanks, everybody. It didn't occur to me that it was to be my boat,

though I have wanted it times enough," he laughed. "Uncle Seth acted so honest about it, and didn't want me to know who it was for, so I could honestly say I didn't know when folks asked me. But no one did ask me though."

"Wal," said the old man, "if they had, you could have honestly said you didn't know."

"My! I never could have anything I'd like better," he declared. "Mother, Aunt Cynthia, did you two know about this?"

Both smiled knowingly, and said they did.

"Well," he bubbled, "I am glad I didn't find out, though I was thick not to guess. She is a surprise surely. Why, that's the name for her," he cried, "*Surprise*."

"That's a fact," agreed Uncle Seth. "Kinder seems appropriate, don't it? We ain't got no spring water to christen her with, but I don't think much of breakin' glass bottles in sech shaller water, anyhow. Clean sea water is good enough."

"You are the one to christen and name her, Uncle Seth," cried Sam.

"Wal, if you're set on it, I will," said Uncle Seth; and dipping a pail full of clear sparkling water from the harbor, he dashed it over her bow and at the same time shouted, "I christen thee *Surprise*."

"Now for a sail in her," cried Sam. "Uncle Seth, you are sailing master today. Everybody get aboard," and with the old sailor at the tiller and the new white sail hoisted, the catboat *Surprise* started upon her first short voyage.

A crowd of boatmen on the shore gave her a cheer as she passed out of the inner harbor over the bar. They knew she was a new craft to the harbor and their cries of approval warmed the heart of the boy, as the glistening boat sped through the water: Uncle Seth at her wheel watched her pull, with a smile of satisfaction.

"Luff wants trimmin' a leetle," he said, as he looked the sail over critically. "I'll do that right away. Don't leak a drop fur as I can see, Sam."

"Not a bit, Uncle Seth," said Sam. "You've had her swelling in the water and, be-

sides, you did such a thorough job of caulking that she couldn't leak. Those curtains in the cabin are your work, Mother," he declared, smiling towards her. "Isn't the cabin a dandy? Those cushions look comfortable enough to sleep on."

"Oh, she's such a pretty boat!" said Mrs. Hotchkiss. "I think Captain Nickerson was very kind to put all that work in for you, Samuel."

"He sure was," said Sam, giving Uncle Seth a pat of affection.

"Wal, you see, Mrs. Hotchkiss," drawled Uncle Seth, "it was pleasant work and it's some satisfaction to know that I can still build a boat. I had lots of fun doin' it, perticerly as Mr. Hotchkiss allowed me free rein in the matter of stuff to put into her. This mahogany wheel, now, is jest a leetle fancy that dresses her up. It's sure been a pleasant job and, besides, I've had good help." He smiled at Sam.

"Guess I didn't help much," protested Sam, "but it was fun anyway. My! can't she sail?"

"Yep," answered Uncle Seth, "she acts purty and no mistake. I tell ye, next summer you and I and yer father ought to take her and cruise along the coast stoppin' where we have a mind to."

"That would be great, wouldn't it, Father?"

"Sounds good to me," responded his father. "I never did any cruising, but I'm game to try it."

"We could have a right good time," declared the old skipper, "sail around to Nantucket, and then mebbe down to Newport—Oh, anywhere most. She'd stand most any kind of weather."

"I wish Tom could go," said Sam.

"Wal, mebbe he can," agreed Uncle Seth. "Yer father will be his boss by that time, and if you can tear Tom loose from the farm, that would make up a nice little party."

"We won't git home in time for dinner, if we don't come about, Seth," reminded Mrs. Nickerson.

"Come about, then, it is," said her husband. "When Aunt Cynthia says dinner, I allus agree with her," he chuckled.

"Makes me think of old man Lipton. He allus agreed with folks, no matter what they said. One time there was a new brand of religious meetin's held here at the school-house. I fergit what it was now. They called 'em religious meetin's, but they seemed to me to be mighty curious. Old Lipton went to the meetin's, and jined the movement right away, and was goin' it strong. Somebody over to the corner see Lipton one night an' says, 'Uncle Ceph, what is this new sect they've started up here, you belong to 'em, don't ye?'

" 'Sartin,' says he, 'I've jined up with 'em. It's a great idee.'

" 'You're one of 'em, be ye?' asked one feller. 'Wal what do ye believe, are they Baptist or Methodist or what?'

" 'I don't know, I don't know,' he talked quick and said things over twice, 'I believe jest as they do, I believe jest as they do.'

" 'So yer see, I don't know what we're goin' to have for dinner, but I believe jest as Cynthy does,' he laughed.

CHAPTER XXIV

CYNTHIA B. VERSUS THE SURPRISE

THE name *Surprise* now adorned the stern and bow of the new catboat. Sam had spent the larger part of his waking hours in her since the christening two weeks before. He had sailed and sailed by the hour, and once in a while he had raced with other craft for short spurts about the harbor. Beaten them? Surely he had beaten them, when they were at all in his class. He could get all the speed from the *Surprise* that she had to give. Quick to obey his hand, she had never failed him.

He wished he could try her out in a regular race, and sail her as he did the *Cynthia B.* last summer. He decided that there was nothing in the bay or along the shore that could defeat his twenty-five footer. He had done pretty well, he told himself, in two

seasons to be able to handle a boat so skillfully. He felt that now he was a thorough sailor: that he could meet all comers and all boats, and lead them.

He had proved to his own satisfaction that there wasn't a boat in the harbor that could—Ah! the *Cynthia B.*, he had never sailed his craft against Uncle Seth's boat. Of course the *Cynthia B.* was a good boat but the *Surprise* was a better one, he was confident. He would like to try against the *Cynthia B.*, but it would be a shame to hurt Uncle Seth's feelings by bringing down the old favorite to defeat. If Uncle Seth wasn't an old man, and if he didn't think so much of him, he wouldn't hesitate a moment to issue a challenge. Uncle Seth had been so good to him always, and had taught him how to sail: no, he wouldn't for the world hurt the dear old man's feelings.

"How's the *Surprise*?" asked Uncle Seth, wiping his hands upon the roller towel in the kitchen.

"Going great," said Sam. "I haven't found anything that I couldn't pass so far."

"Sho, clean up any boat in the harbor, I s'pose," remarked the old man.

"I think I can," declared Sam, confidently.

"Even the *Cynthia B.*, I reckon," smiled Uncle Seth.

"Well, er—er—I don't know. The *Surprise* sails pretty well," admitted the boy.

"Depends sunthin' on who's sailing her, I reckon," said Uncle Seth, looking keenly at Sam.

"Maybe," said Sam. "Of course, I understand her pretty well, for I've been sailing her every day for two weeks."

"Sure enough, so ye have," agreed Uncle Seth. "In that length of time you ought to pick up all her kinks. Wal, now, you have to go back home termorrer, what do you say to you and me havin' a little brush? Me in the *Cynthy B.*, and you in the *Surprise*! Le's wind up the summer right. You've got the *Surprise* so she'll lie down and roll over for ye, purty nigh; do all the tricks. I want to see how you can make her act."

This was, of course, what Sam would rather do than anything, but he wished he hadn't

talked so much about the *Surprise* now, for he saw that if he sailed her against the *Cynthia B.*, Uncle Seth would be pretty well broken up over the defeat of his pet. No, he'd have to get out of it somehow, just for the old sailor's sake.

"I don't believe I can, Uncle Seth. I'll have quite a lot of packing to do, and I'm not sure that I'll have time," he said, lamely.

"Jimmynetty! It won't take no time at all. We could run out to the can buoy and back. There's one more race in the *Cynthia B.*, I reckon," he said, almost wistfully.

Sam couldn't upset Uncle Seth by racing against the *Cynthia B.* Here he had a brand new boat that would do anything for him. It wasn't fair. No, he couldn't. The *Surprise* carried quite a bit more sail than the older boat. The *Cynthia B.* would be sailing under too great odds.

"I guess not, Uncle Seth. We're going tomorrow, you know, and I have lots of things to do. I've had a bully summer, Uncle Seth, even better than last. The four months I've been here have seemed mighty short," he

rattled on, trying to get off the subject of the boat race: but Uncle Seth was not to be put off.

"Look here, Sam," demanded the Captain, "you ain't scairt to try it, are ye?"

"No, sir," came from Sam, firmly. "It's just that I don't care about it."

"Be a sport, Sam," urged Uncle Seth. "We won't git together again on the harbor 'fore another summer. Don't try to dodge. I believe you dassen't."

That was enough. To tell a boy that he "dassen't,"—that's a little too much, and Sam ran true to form.

"All right, I'm game," he said quietly. "Just the same, I hate to beat Uncle Seth," he thought.

The two boats were ready. Sam looked over to where the *Cynthia B.* with her patched canvas and dulled paint turned about under Uncle Seth's hand. What a contrast! the boy thought. The *Surprise* bristled her snow white sail confidently. The varnish upon her spars gleamed in the sunlight. She had been over the course, to the can buoy and back,

many times during the two weeks she had been in the water.

They were to take no passengers. Sam's father stood on the wharf with a revolver. Three minutes before the hour, a revolver shot would tell them to get ready. The starting line lay between the wharf and a dory anchored off to the south, a hundred yards or so. Exactly on the hour, a second shot would mean they were to cross the line for the start. If either crossed before the report sounded, he would be obliged to return and cross again. So it behooved each boatman to keep his craft near the line, and on the second shot be ready to shoot across. They were to race to the can buoy, some three miles out, and return. They would beat out, and on the return run before the strong westerly breeze.

Bang! went the three minute gun.

Sam held his eye on the watch at his wrist. Uncle Seth was sailing around in circles,—not apparently trying to keep very near the starting line. "Uncle Seth doesn't seem to realize that within a half a minute the start-

ing gun will sound," thought Sam. Sam held his boat, with sails aflutter, as near the line as he could. She seemed like some gigantic greyhound held in leash, impatient to be off.

The *Cynthia B.* came about leisurely, now headed for the starting line. "She does cut through the water pretty," Sam admitted.

Bang! Over the line shot the *Surprise* but right at her heels came the *Cynthia B.* Sam was off on the port tack. Uncle Seth kept the *Cynthia B.* on the starboard tack. "It doesn't matter," thought the boy. "I'll tack again when I reach the point."

The point, which Sam held in mind was densely wooded. The neck of land, that Uncle Seth made for, was wind swept and bare. When the *Surprise* dashed off Sam exulted in her performance. She'd show the *Cynthia B.* her heels. The new boat slackened her speed a bit. Sam realized that he shouldn't hold her close to the wind. He remembered that Uncle Seth had told him that nothing is gained by jamming a boat so close to the wind that her sails are all ashake, so he bore off a bit. Now she filled her sails

and took the bone in her teeth. "Glorious!" thought Sam.

When the point was reached and he tacked, he saw why Uncle Seth had chosen the star-board tack. The dense growth shut off a good deal of wind, while the sandy neck where the *Cynthia B.* had turned had no obstruction upon it. The *Surprise* bowled along, heeling over and behaving handsomely. How she could go! Sam tended sheet and used all the sailor knowledge that he had acquired.

"Full and bye," he kept saying to himself. "That's the thing." The waves dashed by him, and the spray ran in rivulets along her deck.

Why! what is that? The *Cynthia B.*? She's rounding the buoy. How in the world did she get up there so soon? Now she's coming back, with her canvas outflung. Before Sam made the turn to round the buoy, the *Cynthia B.* passed astern of him on her return trip.

The *Surprise* wore around the red can, "A little short, perhaps, but she'll make that

up. Just wait till she gets on the home stretch and strikes her gait," thought her skipper, as she raced after the dingy patched canvas of her smaller sister boat.

Fifty yards ahead Sam saw Uncle Seth sitting stolidly at the wheel, and then the boy caught a white wisp of smoke, for the old man had let the sail boat go by herself long enough to cup his hands and calmly light his pipe. That was rubbing it in! Sam grimly clenched the sheet and wheel.

What was the matter? The new boat had all the wind which was given to Uncle Seth's craft, and yet there was the *Cynthia B.* ramping along, increasing the distance between them every minute. The youthful skipper became exasperated as he saw the white haired old sailor in the lead and caught the little puffs of smoke from his pipe.

There was nothing more that Sam could do. The *Surprise* had every inch of sail drawing taut. He tried shifting her course a trifle but to no avail. He was being whipped. He knew it.

Bang! The gun spoke, as the *Cynthia B.*

swirled across the line, and Uncle Seth brought her around and up to the wharf. She must have crossed—how many boat lengths ahead? Boat lengths! It could be better measured in ocean liner lengths.

When the *Surprise* came abreast the wharf Uncle Seth was chatting with Mr. Hotchkiss. The *Cynthia B.* lay with her sails furled, moored to the wharf post.

Suddenly Sam saw light. He knew now that all his pity had been wasted upon the old skipper. He himself had been rather cocky about his sailing ability; and the old man, dear old Uncle Seth, had tried in his homely way to take the cockiness out of him. It wasn't the fault of the *Surprise*. Of course, Uncle Seth could change boats and beat him just the same. He'd had a swelled head,—that was the matter with him. What a fool boy he had been! Well, he wouldn't be a sore head. He hadn't been beaten by a better boat, but by an old and better sailor, who had sailed a boat for years and years.

Sam jumped to the wharf and shook hands with Uncle Seth. "The *Cynthia B.* is no

better boat than the *Surprise*, Uncle Seth," he said with a smile, "but you outsailed me, that's all. I'm in the kindergarten class yet. I guess I forgot for a while that you were a regular sailor."

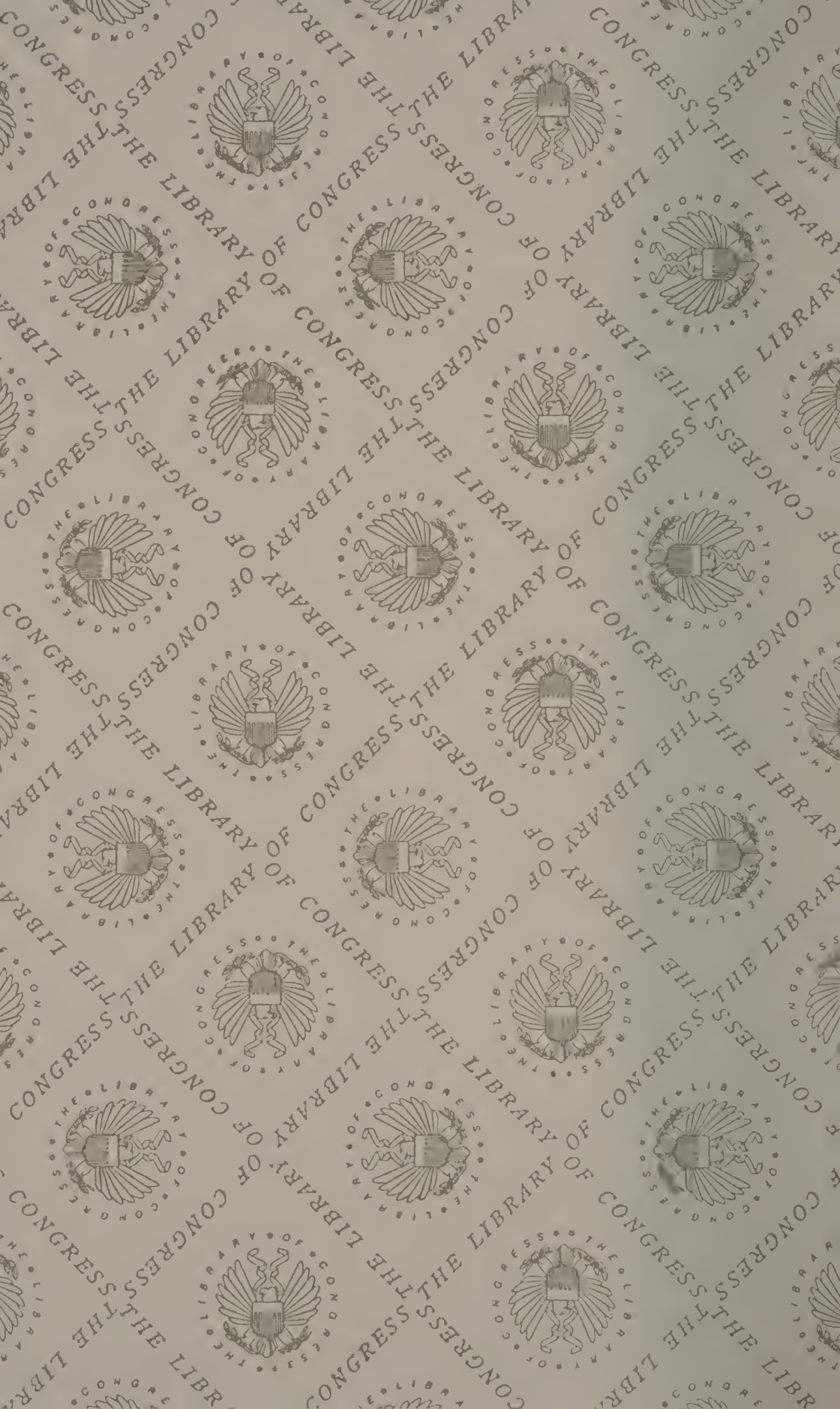
"There, Sam," said the old man, his face lighting up with pleasure, "that's the way to take a lickin'. No excuses, no nothin'. Sam, I'm proud of ye. You sail fust rate, but, as a general thing, it ain't a mite of use for a young colt to go against a seasoned old race hoss."

"I'll remember, Uncle Seth," laughed Sam, as he pushed the *Surprise* off toward her mooring.

"Well, you won, Uncle Seth, you beat Sam in good shape. I hope it doesn't bother him too much," said Mr. Hotchkiss, as he and the captain were walking up the lane to the house.

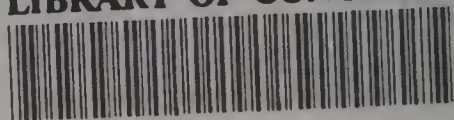
"You know, Mr. Hotchkiss," said Uncle Seth, his eyes twinkling, "sometimes a kickin' strap put on a colt, when he's young, is the makin' of him. It keeps him from gittin' his heels too fur over the dasher."

THE END





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